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A Weekly Journal of Opinion

SEPTEMBER 16 & 23, 1996

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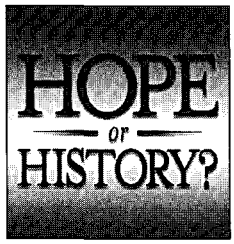

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CORRESPONDENCE

Bad sign

To the editors:
Amen to your editorial, "Sign It" (August 12): what a marvelous bit of neo-liberal utopianism. The welfare reform bill, you assure us, "will, finally, start the process by which America's underclass problem can be solved." The block grant system "is likely to point the way to ending 'the culture of poverty.' " It's worth taking some risks to end "the continuing agony of the underclass." And who will perform these miracles? The governors, aided and abetted by the tooth fairy?

T.R. THOLFSEN
Pine Plains, New York

To the editors:
Your editorial is probably right that Daniel Patrick Moynihan's prediction of "3.5 million children on the streets" is way off the mark, but almost everyone agrees the welfare bill will throw hundreds of thousands of children into poverty and destitution. "Radical state experimentation" that devastates so many children's lives is not merely "nasty" or a reform that will "cause some hardship," it is evil, as would be any policy that harms large numbers of innocent people merely to test out debatable strategies. These euphemisms you employ to mask the real actions and results are obscene.

Your argument is equally appalling. The notion that we will find out whether "experiments" aimed at changing a deeply embedded culture of dependence "within a few years" is ridiculous. The idea that states will begin picking up the programs when federal support ends ignores both the current disposition of the middle-class electorate and the inability of poor states to come up with funds. And, curiously, the same issue contains pieces by David Ellwood, Alex Kotlowitz and Katha Pollitt that offer crushing arguments against your main editorial position but that you completely ignore.

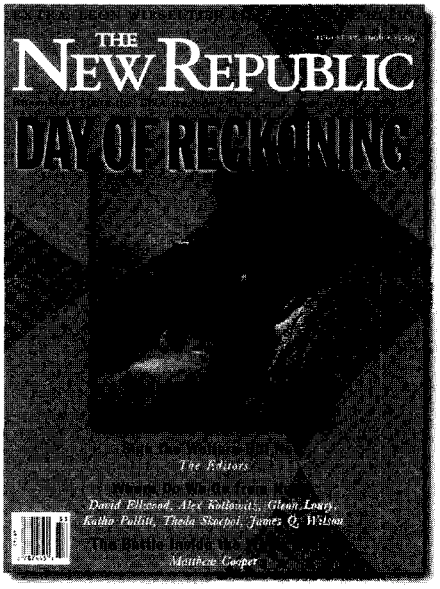
I have been reading TNR for twenty years and have admired your ethical stance on many issues. But the views you now endorse demonstrate a shameful utilitarian willingness to treat some citizens as mere means. Please instruct your circulation department to cancel my subscription.

BRUCE W. BROWER
New Orleans, Louisiana

To the editors:
It is breathtaking that a magazine so supremely sensitive about some forms of bigotry can so cavalierly and regularly walk the borderline of racial bigotry. Your August 12 cover photo of the African American mother smoking her butt in her baby's face (and on the nation's tab) is just the latest, most dismaying example. This is what collegiate thinkers produce when they decide that intellectual honesty requires them to dismiss as PC what the rest of the world knows to be common civility.

Take a hard look at yourselves before you become something you would despise.

GEORGE FISHER
San Francisco, California



To the editors:
At last, a welfare plan even I can understand: (1) Go to work. (2) No jobs? (3) Drop dead. That'll teach 'em!

FRED HAHN
Evanston, Illinois

Friends

To the editors:
While I have always valued the opinion of Martin Peretz on Israel and the Middle East, I must take exception to his recent statement that President Clinton's friendship toward Israel is more authentic and uncompromising than that of any previous U.S. administration, including Harry Truman's ("Israel Bonds," August 5). Even Peretz has admitted to his chagrin and discomfiture that Warren Christopher, a relic of Carter's anti-Israel policy, Dennis Ross and David Miller have established our policy in that region of the world. Obviously there is a contradiction when public support is expressed by President Clinton for Israel while he has allowed foreign policy decisions to be made by known anti-Israel presidential appointees.

Instead, I feel that the support of Clinton for the former Labor government of Israel was based on the eagerness of Shimon Peres to accede to all the demands of not only the PLO and Yasir Arafat but also the pro-Arabist State Department. Agreement with the former Labor government is not equivalent to support for the security of Israel. With Clinton's blocking effectively the relocation of the U.S. Embassy to a part of Jerusalem within the 1967 borders of Israel, he has not demonstrated friendship for that country above and beyond that of Harry Truman, Lyndon Johnson and even Ronald Reagan.

His "support" for Israel unfortunately has been only a political ploy founded not on consideration for the security of the Jewish nation but only as a route to the American Jewish vote.

NELSON MARANS
Silver Spring, Maryland

Blood sport

To the editors:
Serving as the provider of nearly half the nation's blood supply during a period of unprecedented change in American health care presents some formidable challenges. However, contrary to the grossly inaccurate conclusions reached by Katherine Eban Finkelstein in her August 12 article, "Blood Money," the American Red Cross has consistently met those challenges in a careful and responsive manner that reflects good and safe business practices and an unwavering commitment to the organization's humanitarian mission—helping to save lives.

Clearly, the nationwide move toward managed care has created a new economic model for blood banking in the United States. The Red Cross has responded to this new model by taking steps to reduce costs through reengineering virtually every aspect of the organization's Biomedical Services, creating greater efficiencies and replicating proven best practices throughout the national system. The results have been the ability to provide the safest possible and most cost-effective blood. Such improvements support our humanitarian goals by helping to ensure that the gift of life can continue to be given—wherever and whenever the need arises across the country.

Finkelstein is terribly misguided when

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she concludes that Red Cross Biomedical Services should separate from the charitable organization from which it was born nearly half a century ago. The organization's humanitarian mission is the driving force behind the tremendous success of the Red Cross volunteer blood services program. Saving lives and responding to emergencies are what compel generous Red Cross donors to give blood time and again.

GENE DYSON
Acting President,
American Red Cross
Washington, D.C.

Liberal sympathizers

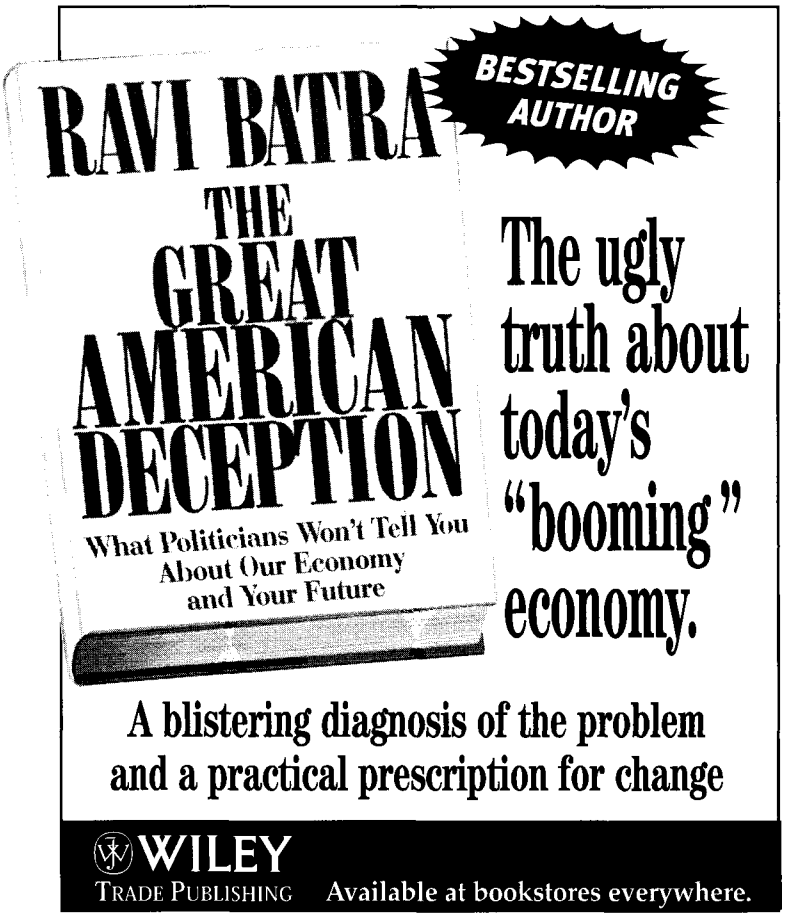
To the editors:

Although, as a liberal and admirer of Isaiah Berlin, I sympathize with Michael Ignatieff's views, I must take issue with two points he makes in his review of Paul Berman's *A Tale of Two Utopias* ("After the Revolutions," August 19 & 26).

First, Ignatieff exaggerates the animosity between liberals and radicals. Although they were ideologically opposed, they came together on many concrete issues, even if their tactics differed. Many liberals opposed the Vietnam War and supported the free speech and women's liberation movements, both of which promoted individual liberty.

Second, when Ignatieff suggests that liberalism subordinates justice to liberty, he is only partially right. He ignores the fact that John Rawls, whom he mentions as an important liberal theorist, has concentrated on justice as a basis for liberalism; and that J.S. Mill, while fearing democracy's threat to individual freedom, supported increased participation and representation of workers in industry. Isaiah Berlin himself has pointed out that, when values clash, tradeoffs or compromises are the best way to resolve such conflicts and that there is no a priori basis for always putting one value above another. Thus, when it is a matter of choosing between liberty and justice, liberty must sometimes be subordinated to justice, and vice versa. Berlin, as a liberal, generally prefers liberty; on the other hand he has said that the three most important ethical values today are "justice, kindness and tolerance." Liberals should be reluctant to subordinate or reject other values other than liberty; it is this tolerance, skepticism and lack of hatred, and not any way of ranking priorities, which differentiates liberalism from radicalism.

JOSHUA L. CHERNISS
Highland Park, New Jersey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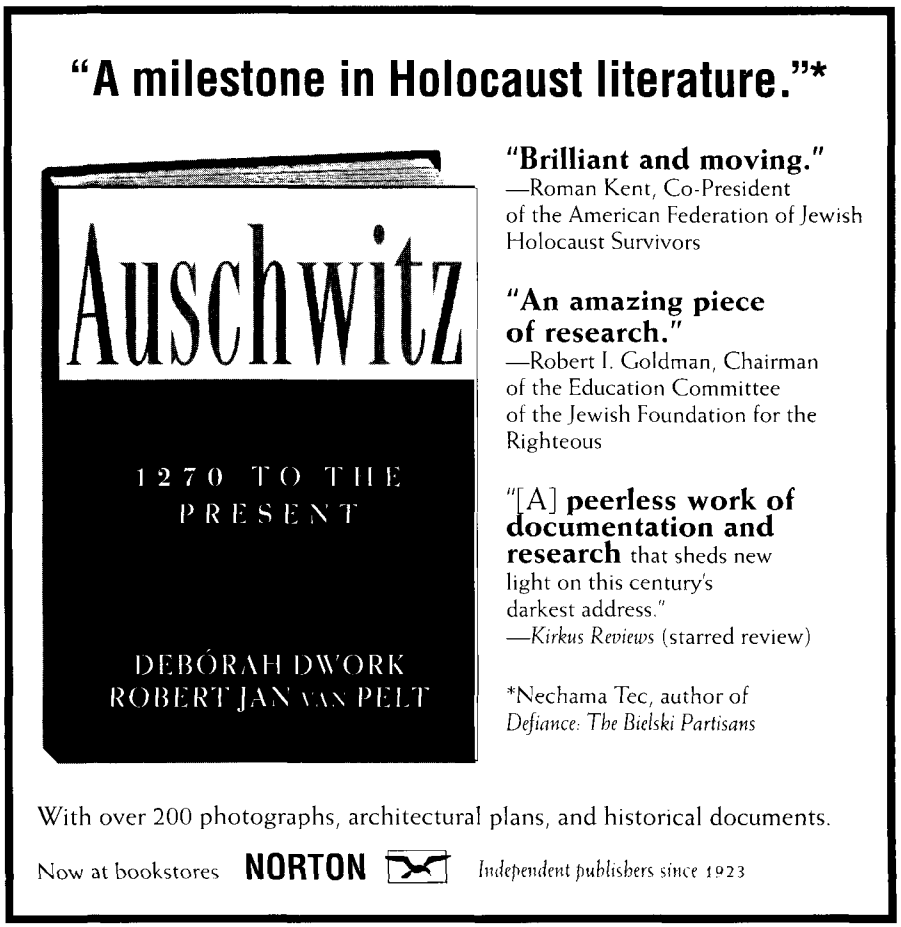
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In Tennessee, Britanny Johnson and her mother, Kathy, attend classes together through Families for Learning, a program sponsored by Toyota.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

SEPTEMBER 16 & 23, 1996

THE OTHER CAMPAIGN

The electorate has only now begun to consider the presidential race between Bill Clinton and Bob Dole in earnest. But behind this predictable drama a more exciting race has already begun: between Al Gore and Jack Kemp four years from now. Whether these frontrunners—if it's not too early to use the term—will win their parties' nominations in 2000 is pure speculation. Nonetheless, each of these two men represents possibilities for his party that his senior running mate does not.

It wasn't hard for Kemp to appear progressive next to Bob Dole. The Republican presidential candidate seems to embody the idea of yesterday. Yesterday is his trope and his promise. Remember his clearest words at the San Diego convention: "Let me be the bridge to a time of tranquility, faith and confidence in action. And to those who say it was never so, that America has not been better, I say, you're wrong, and I know because I was there ... follow me." There are many people for whom nostalgia is an adequate political platform—but not enough to make it a winning electoral strategy. It is for the many others that Kemp has been added to the ticket.

Past 60, Kemp still has the aura of youth or, at least, of energy. His heart does not throb to those heartbreaking issues, such as abortion, that make rancor the language of our politics. Though a bit goofy in his enthusiasms, he has that fetching trait of being intrigued by the idea of having ideas. Of course, he is a vice presidential candidate for one reason above all: he incarnates the Republicans' popular dogma that taxes should be cut because there is little on which government should spend the people's hard-earned (and in some cases not-so-hard-earned) dollars. This dogma is now all that unites the Republican Party's right wing and its moderates; it is all the party really stands for.

Michael Walzer argues in this issue (see page 27) that Clinton's opportunism is a political asset, and maybe it is. But his opportunism, while disarming, leaves the Democratic faithful unarmed. If, for example, Clinton proposes a large tax cut of his own, his party's credentials against the supply-side religion will be forsaken. Clinton's flexibility—to put a favorable twist on a serious character flaw—has exasperated even his most loyal supporters. The middle for Clinton is neither a psychological predilection nor a philosophical preference. It is the shifting sands on which he seems somehow most comfortable, regardless of the issue. Not for nothing, then, did Democrats and crucial independents lament, even as early as 1992, that the second man on the ticket was not the first.

It's no secret: THE NEW REPUBLIC has long thought Al Gore should be president, and certainly ever since he ran in the 1988 primaries. In Gore there remains the essential and substantial core of what it means to be a Democrat. The difference between a Democrat and a Republican, often forgotten today, is that the former believes government is a necessary partner—though sometimes just a limited partner—to almost all of the great human ventures and adventures on which the prosperity of our people, the excellence of our medicine, the richness of our science, the primacy of our universities and our first place in space are based. This core belief differentiates Al Gore from Jack Kemp.

Character, too, distinguishes these two aspirants for the presidency. While Kemp is a showboater, Gore takes on the important and often thankless tasks of governing. On some of these projects—the dismantling of the nuclear warehouses of ex-Soviet states, to name just one—the very safety of mankind depends. On the meticulous work of cutting the government and the government budget down to prudent and productive scale the viability of the entire public sector ultimately hinges. Few Democrats, indeed few in public life, have an equally exciting and practical vision of the nexus between the realistic possibilities of democracy and the possibilist realities of technology and of science. Much more than his potential rivals to lead the Democrats—the party bureaucrat Chris Dodd; the self-styled Cassandra Bill Bradley; Dick Gephardt, who represents everything the Democrats have struggled to put behind them; and Evan Bayh, who until Tuesday night was considered presidential material by some—Gore has already proved himself suited to the task, not just of a presidential campaign but of the presidency.

A vice presidential race has never overshadowed a presidential race, and the great debate in 1996 will still take place between Bob Dole and Bill Clinton. But the vice presidential race this year diverts our attention, for the debate from which the future will be derived will be the one between Jack Kemp and Al Gore. •

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NOTEBOOK

LANGUAGE POLICE: One of the Democrats' favorite talking points this campaign season is the claim that President Clinton has "put 100,000 police on the streets." It's a winning New Democrat line, and it's not true. So, at the convention, Senator Joe Biden set the record straight: the president has actually "put 44,000 new police on the streets." But wait a second—that's not right either. According to the Justice Department, Clinton's 1994 crime bill has only put 19,149 officers on the streets so far. Granted, Clinton's six-year plan hasn't been fully implemented. But, in all likelihood, even when it's in place, the number of new cops will still fall short of the magic 100,000 figure. Turns out a lot of police departments don't want the federal help, which will fund the extra positions for just three years and then dry up. The 100,000 figure was cooked up on the fly by Clinton aides early in the 1992 campaign. What's amazing isn't that it hasn't come to fruition, but that it's still taken seriously as a policy goal at all.

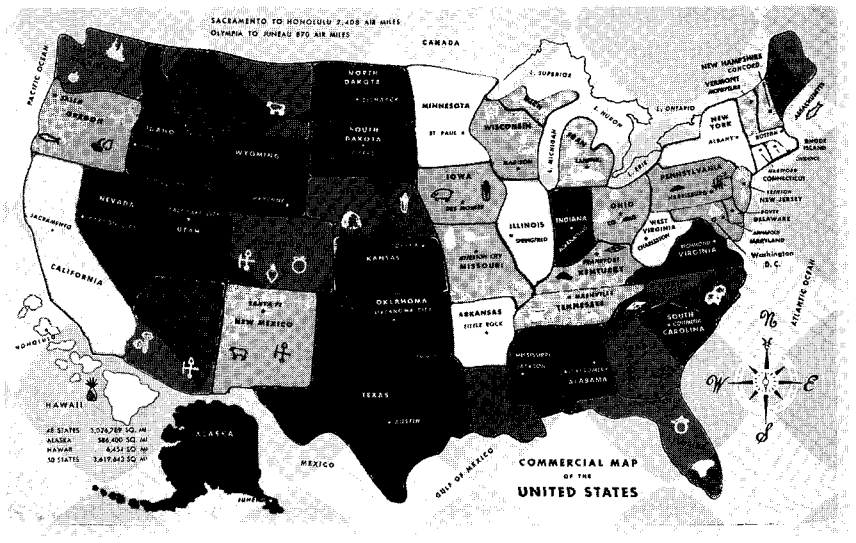
Weekly Electoral Vote Estimate

As of 8/23/96

by Hal Bruno, ABC News Political Director

(538 Total Votes, 270 Required for Election)

Clinton=318 Even=99 Dole=121



Weekly estimates are not scientific, but the result of a compilation of interviews and local polling

OFF THE BUS: There is something exquisite about the irony of Judge W. Arthur Garrity Jr.'s decision last week that the 35 percent set-aside for black and Hispanic students at the Boston Latin School is "constitutionally suspect." It was Garrity, after all, who originally imposed the quota in 1976 on the grounds that it was mandated by the Constitution. Garrity's desegregation plan, the subject of J. Anthony Lukas's epic, *Common Ground*, bused almost 50,000 students to different schools and convulsed the city. But now Garrity has read the Supreme Court's most recent decisions, which suggest that, to justify racial preferences, the link between past discrimination by the Boston School Committee and its lingering effects at Boston Latin must be far more tangible than it is today. Unfortunately, Garrity indicated that school officials will have to devise an alternate way to prevent Boston Latin from becoming overwhelmingly white and Asian American. The Boston School Committee is already exploring the possibility of admitting the majority of students to this select school through a lottery or adopting preferences based on economic disadvantage. We hope they resist both of these impulses.

BLOWING SMOKE: Last week the White House unveiled regulations designed to discourage underage smoking. Republican spinners sprang into action. "Today's tobacco news," scoffed Bob Dole's press secretary, "is designed to distract attention from Bill Clinton's abject failure in the war on drugs." But Clinton's tobacco regulation is a substantive initiative. Conversely, drug use, as we noted in these pages several months ago, bears virtually no relation to presidential action. Perhaps this is only fair, since Clinton continues to bask in triumphs for which his responsibility is partial (the economy) or negligible (the declining crime rate). Still, Dole's harping on drugs is a blatant attempt to dredge up Clinton's past marijuana use (which consisted of a single unconsummated toke). Meanwhile, Dole hasn't ever taken a position on the tobacco regulations themselves. Which issue, again, is the distraction?

HORSE RACE OF A DIFFERENT COLOR: Even worse than the media's tut-tutting about horse race journalism this presidential campaign season is their reliance on national voter preference polls, which, since presidents are elected state by state, don't really explain which horse is ahead. So, thanks to ABC News, TNR will begin a semi-regular look at what the electoral map would look like were the election held around now. (Map modified for TNR by Jane Holloway.) •

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NEW YORK POSTCARD

EAST SIDE STORY

By Liesl Schillinger

If you walk east on Sixth Street in New York's Alphabet City, down the grid of East Village streets named A, B, C, D—you get the idea—you will eventually come to a street called Loisaida. Loisaida's real name is Avenue C, but it feels much farther away, as if it should be Avenue Y or Z. The local myth is that "Loisaida" is a Spanish take on "LowerEastSideA." For all anyone knows, that's true.

As you near Loisaida, you hear a buoyant jingle that gets louder and louder until it turns into salsa music, rolling out of every car and bodega door. Mustached men sit on doorsteps, smoking and lazily gossiping. Enormously fat women pass slowly, deep in Spanish conversation, shaking meaty fists with emotion, and their tiny chihuahuas precede them, minute paws mincing a staccato on the pavement. Everywhere there are babies and toddlers, sitting diapered in their strollers or running on the sidewalk, mouths dripping with melting popsicles, laughing, as their young mothers talk and talk and keep an eye on them, gold earrings gently swinging. The bedraggled food trucks outside the red brick projects sell arroz con pollo and burritos, and the chips everyone munches are plantain, not potato, the juices guava and papaya.

Alphabet City used to be the kind of neighborhood no cabbie would take you to after dark. It was a little desolate, sometimes loud, the kind of place where people fought and sometimes shot and where the edgy yuppies went to get their hard drugs and their pot. Decent people, like the Ukrainians and Bangladeshis who had their businesses nearby, stayed home after dusk. Squatters inhabited abandoned buildings, and homeless people took up residence in Tompkins Square Park, raving at the moon, and then at the sun, day after day, without interference.

Then, a few years back, the mayor kicked out the homeless people. Businesses moved in; then cafés, then clubs, then coffeeshops, then herb shops, vintage clothing shops, new funky clothing shops, poetry slam reading spaces, tattoo shops, dance clubs and restaurant after restaurant. In five years, everything has changed.

Except Loisaida. On a muggy August Sunday, after brunch at one of the Avenue A cafés, you can walk a little farther down, past the garden someone thought to plant in a once-scary block, with daylilies and stone foot paths, columbine and snapdragons and hidden goldfish ponds. You walk another block, and you're to the school and the basketball court where the black and Hispanic kids play, dripping clean sweat in the heat. Then you hear the buzz that will be salsa. Swaying to it, you move among the people: the families back from church, their daughters in white patent leather shoes and frills; the young boys in need of a bath who laugh hilariously as they cycle past, racing each other and terrorizing pedestrians; the old men pushing their shopping carts with the week's supply of habichuelas and rice. On one side of the street grandmothers finger the socks at the weekly jumble sale. The teenage girls crack their gum and bare their midriffs, trying to look tough but desirable, and the teenage boys pose and strut nearby, rehearsing their raps, studiedly ignoring the girls.

At the end of the block, you join the procession of couples and kids and walk the easy overpass across the FDR Drive. Two minutes later, you're in the long green park that runs some twenty city blocks alongside the East River, untidy but embracing, dotted with tennis courts, running tracks, soccer and baseball fields, grassy slopes to sun on, and a promenade. It is Loisaida's back garden, largely unknown to the neighborhood's newcomers.

The salsa is at a roar, the trees are huge and green. Venders sell hot dogs, Caribbean food and gewgaws. Everywhere children scamper, women confer and families picnic, barbecuing hamburgers and chicken. One clan melts into the next, distinguished by the vaguely different tunes that boom from each family's sound-system. On the soccer field, Maradona look-alikes run with the ball, cheered on by women in the bleachers. Beyond the fields, lovers and old married couples stroll along the asphalt East River promenade or rest on the benches, children cycle and rollerblade, and proud dogs burst past, heading for the fields, glancing back to make sure their masters are following.

Walking among the dogs and people, you can see white and green pleasure boats slowly progressing up the East River. The water is blue, the sun is intense. People wave from the boats. Jetskiers buck past, and occasionally a speedboat scuds toward the Brooklyn Bridge. Across the river you can see the Domino Sugar refinery, where giant ships are docked, bringing sugar from the Dominican Republic and points south, from the home countries of many of the Loisaidans. Fishing poles lean against the promenade's iron railing, lines trailing into the lapping East River. The fish are safe to eat, the water is safe to swim in. A few feet back from the water, Hector and Juan sit back on the bench, as they have done before, eating chicken and rice, laughing and drinking beer from a cooler. The day's catch flickers in the pails at their feet; there is the promise of more to come. This is the New York City that they know. However Alphabet City may change, their New York City, their Loisaida, will be waiting for them down by the river next summer, and the summer after that, and the summer after that, and the salsa will play again.

LIESL SCHILLINGER is a columnist for the London *Independent on Sunday*.

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Why black men hate it.

THE WELFARE RAP

By Bill Stephney

In the most talked about black comedy performance since Eddie Murphy's *Raw*, former "Saturday Night Live" star Chris Rock declares in his recent HBO special that there's "a war going on ... black people versus niggas!" In Takoma Park, in the heart of the Washington, D.C.-Prince Georges County, Maryland, black belt, Rock describes the two groups' divergent responses to the welfare bill before Congress. "Black people don't give a fuck about welfare; niggas are shaking in their boots!" Rock's monologue and the exuberant "hoot"s and "teach, brother"s it elicits from an all-black crowd reflect what polling data from within the African American community has said for years: the silent majority of black folk don't want welfare and its destructive effects.

In contrast to the rhetoric of the fiftysomething civil rights leaders assembled at the Democratic convention, you can hear a younger generation's rejection of "welfare culture" on the streets, in black newspapers, on black talk radio and in rap music. Take the lyrics from the recent hit single "If I Ruled The World," by Nas: "No welfare supporters/More conscious of the way we raise our daughters." Rap, for the most part, represents young black male anxiety over not just the white male patriarchy (police, racist employers, etc.) but also the black female matriarchy.

The misogyny articulated by the hip hop generation comes from its marginalization by a welfare system that defines "family" as a woman with children and a check from AFDC or child support. It's not just the demise of work in urban America that has alienated black men from the family-supporting and child-rearing positions they used to occupy with pride, it's a welfare/child-support system that has substituted for them. It's thirty years of black male dislocation that's moved us from the R&B of twenty-five years ago—"Ain't No Woman Like The One I've Got"—to such lyrics as "Bitches Ain't Nuthin But Hoes and Tricks."

What are the responsibilities today for a 19-year-old male when his 18-year-old "shorty" becomes pregnant? Since *Roe* v. *Wade* (which some think black folk are too primitive to know about), the decision to bring a pregnancy to term is hers alone. Once the child is born, according to most state paternity statutes, he has no rights to it (only the birth mother does). He does have immediate financial responsibilities for the mother and child, whether or not he marries her, even though black women are employed at a higher rate than black men.

What compelling reason does the 18-year-old woman have to marry this young man? Marriage will knock out the child-industrial complex she can enjoy, which can include AFDC, health benefits for her children, housing and energy assistance programs, day care, off-the-books employment such as babysitting, hair-weaving and backup singing, cash from new and old boyfriends, cash from her mother and relatives, cash and gifts from her homegirls. I know of popular vocalists (men, for that matter, as well as women) who while still living in government-subsidized housing were making tens of thousands of dollars doing recordings, voiceovers and live performances. This "CREAM" scenario—"Cash Rules Everything Around Me," in the words of the rappers Method Man and the Wu-Tang Clan—is all these young men and women know. We have the money-for-nothing welfare mentality to thank for it.

For most black men from 1865 through 1965, it was a moral, ethical and spiritual relationship with their wives and their children that gave them the inner strength to fight racism and build their communities. Where marriages failed, the metaphorical "African village" of loving grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and neighbors stepped in. (Of the African American women that I've dated over the past seventeen years, I'd say 50 percent were raised by their grandparents.)

The boys and men devalued and replaced by the current welfare system have taken their dysfunction not only to the recording studio but to the streets as well. According to a study in *The Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* by Douglas A. Smith and G. Roger Jarjoura, titled "Social Structure and Criminal Victimization," single parenting correlates with violent crime much more strongly than does poverty alone. Letters written by John Royster, accused of a terror spree resulting in one murder, a vicious rape in Central Park and two other attacks, told of a life where "he hated his mother" and "she hated him because he looked just like his biological father." In 1960 (during the time of George Wallace and Lester Maddox), there were about 25,000 black men incarcerated in America, while 80 percent of black children were born to families with a married mother and father. Thirty-five years later, after Martin Luther King, busing, Black Power, Hendrix, Oprah, the Huxtables, the Congressional Black Caucus, Carol Moseley-Braun, Colin Powell, high-top fades and, sadly, 72 percent of black children being born to a single mother, I present these statistics:

Incarceration rate: 1994
white female: 50,700 inmates / 60 per 100,000
white male: 674,400 inmates / 860 per 100,000
black female: 52,000 inmates / 435 per 100,000
black male: 683,200 inmates / 6,753 per 100,000

Welfare: blow it up. Get rid of it. Americans deserve safety nets if the family is struck by unforeseen tragedy, not if the tragedy is by choice. Government should cease taking its political lead from spokespeople who

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couldn't run a successful lemonade stand in the Sahara Desert. In 1978 there was no such thing as recorded rap music. Now it is a $2 billion dollar entity, with dozens of young, black multi-millionaire businesspersons. The civil rights-big government coalition may spend the coming years fighting to restore the welfare/child support system that this Congress and this president have taken apart. But, in other parts of the African American community, we've moved on.

BILL STEPHNEY is CEO of StepSun Music and the producer and co-creator of the rap group Public Enemy.

Give it up, Governor.

CASEY CLOSED

By Michael Crowley

All summer long, the story of former Pennsylvania Governor Bob Casey has danced around the outskirts of the presidential campaign. You'll recall that Casey, a Democrat, was denied a speaking slot at his party's 1992 convention, allegedly, as *The New York Times* reported as recently as August 25, "because of his opposition to abortion rights." Now, as both parties bid up the stakes in the tolerance wars, the GOP has been using the purported muzzling of Casey to bludgeon the Democrats—and getting a free pass from the news media. "This is not like the Democratic convention in 1992, where the Democratic governor of Pennsylvania, one of the biggest states in the nation, was prevented from speaking because he's pro-life," Republican National Committee Chairman Haley Barbour said of his party's tightly controlled show in San Diego.

Since leaving office in 1995, Casey himself has rehearsed the tale ad nauseam. "The raging national debate about tolerance on the issue of abortion was ignited," Casey wrote in the August 23 *Wall Street Journal*, when "the party denied me ... the right to speak because I am pro-life and planned to say so from the convention podium." In Chicago, Casey delivered an impassioned pro-life speech Monday, railing against his party's imposed conformity.

But the story is not so simple. According to those who actually doled out the 1992 convention speaking slots, Casey was denied a turn for one simple reason: his refusal to endorse the Clinton-Gore ticket. "It's just not factual!" stammers James Carville, apoplectic over Casey's claims. "You'd have to be idiotic to give a speaking role to a person who hadn't even endorsed you." "Why are you doing this to me?" moans Paul Begala, who, with Carville, managed two Casey campaigns before joining Clinton's team in 1992. "I love Bob Casey, but my understanding was that the dispute was not about his right-to-life views, it was about the Clinton-Gore ticket."

The man best able to explain the decision was the late Ron Brown. He addressed the topic during a roundtable discussion of Clinton campaign veterans (published as *Campaign for President: The Managers Look at '92*). He explained:

> We decided the convention would be totally geared towards the general election campaign, towards promoting our nominee and that everybody who had the microphone would have endorsed our nominee. That was a rule, everybody understood it, from Jesse Jackson to Jerry Brown.... The press reported incorrectly that Casey was denied access to the microphone because he was not pro-choice. He was denied access to the microphone because he had not endorsed Bill Clinton. I believe that Governor Casey knew that. I had made it clear to everybody. And yet it still got played as if it had to do with some ideological split. It had nothing to do with that.

Indeed, the more one examines the version offered by the Democratic hacks, the more compelling it seems. Casey's claims to a speaking slot were tenuous from the outset. He was about to retire from politics, and convention speeches are usually allotted to those running for re-election. "It wasn't like he was going to be on there and they said, 'Well, you're off now,' or something," Carville says. Besides, Casey repeatedly bashed Clinton during the primaries, calling Clinton's success "very tragic." Less than three months before the '92 convention, he urged, "Convention rules provide for the selection of an alternative candidate. Let's pick a winner." Why *would* Clinton invite him to speak?

Casey doesn't dispute that he refused to endorse Clinton. Instead, he notes that Jerry Brown and his sister, Kathleen, also did not endorse, yet were both allowed to speak. Theirs, however, were special cases: Jerry Brown had won several hundred delegates in the primaries, and under convention rules was allowed to speak because his name was placed in nomination. Kathleen Brown, then a candidate for governor of California, was one of the party's highest-profile women (and, though she didn't endorse Clinton, she didn't endorse her own brother, either). Even a reluctant Jesse Jackson was coaxed into backing Clinton in exchange for his speaking slot. Furthermore, a slew of pro-life Democrats, including Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley Jr., Senators John Breaux and Howell Heflin, and five governors, did address the delegates in 1992. Though the speakers didn't dwell on abortion, party officials say they weren't barred from mentioning the issue.

Casey, for his part, offers little evidence for his version beyond his unswayable conviction that the party is out to get him. "I'm sure they were chagrined that I didn't endorse the ticket," he says. "But the overriding reason was that I was going to go up there and make the pro-life case." As he tells it, on July 2, 1992, he wrote to

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Ideology and Common Sense

Advocates of full inclusion have a simple answer to the complicated problem of educating children with disabilities. They believe that all of these children should be put into regular classrooms, regardless of the nature and severity of their disability. And they dismiss people who disagree with them as enemies of children with disabilities.

What full inclusionists don't see (or acknowledge) is that children with disabilities are individuals with differing needs; some benefit from inclusion and others do not. Full inclusionists don't see that medically fragile children and children with severe behavioral disorders are more likely to be harmed than helped when they are placed in regular classrooms where teachers do not have the highly specialized training to deal with their needs. They don't see that when a disabled student misbehaves or demands extraordinary attention from the classroom teacher, the learning of all the other children in the class is being sacrificed. And they don't admit that there is absolutely no evidence supporting the idea that all children with disabilities do better in regular classrooms.

For Mark, inclusion in a big-city high school would be an exercise in terror.

With advocates of full inclusion insisting on their one-size-fits-all ideology, it sometimes takes the parents of a disabled child to bring the conversation back into the real world. Arch and Margaret Puddington are parents whose younger son, Mark, is afflicted with a relatively rare condition called Cornelia de Lange syndrome. This means that Mark cannot run, jump, or pronounce more than a handful of intelligible syllables. His IQ was once evaluated at 36. Arch Puddington recently wrote an article for *Commentary* (May 1996) reflecting on life with Mark and America's treatment of the mentally retarded. He discusses, among other topics, the debate over full inclusion—which, to a parent of a severely disabled child, "involves much more than an abstract argument over educational policy."

Puddington knows that full inclusion can work; he's seen cases where it did: "Some children may indeed be able to participate in the competitive environment of a normal classroom; this is particularly the case with children who suffer from certain physical disabilities, and young children who are only mildly retarded." But Puddington is also a practical guy. He realizes that it is one thing to have lofty ideals and quite another to make inclusion work for all children with disabilities. He cites a report by the National Association of State Boards of Education as a prime example of putting ideology ahead of common sense. The report endorses inclusion on the sweeping grounds of educational reform, civil rights, and equity, but as Puddington points out, it is silent on an important practical matter that will determine whether anybody in a class—children with disabilities or those without them—will receive an education:

> [It] ignores the critical question of how the fully inclusive school is to cope with autistic children, or children who exhibit strange and inappropriate behavior, who become violent when frustrated, who are chronically disruptive, or who require exceptional medical attention. No wonder middle-class parents are beginning to cite the ever growing emphasis on "special needs" as among the reasons for transferring their own children from public to private schools.

Puddington is not blinded by ideology, and he realizes that a one-size-fits-all approach to inclusion would hurt everyone, especially disabled kids. Take the case of his own son, Mark:

> Were New York to take [the path of full inclusion], Mark would be transferred from his present school, which is devoted solely to special education classes, and placed in a regular classroom in our neighborhood high school, a forbidding building with a rough and intimidating student body. Because of his precarious sense of balance and lack of coordination, Mark is physically quite fearful; he goes into panic if accosted by overly playful small dogs. For him, inclusion in a big-city high school would be an exercise in terror.

And if forced into a regular classroom, Mark would not be the only person who would suffer:

> Mark would present his new teachers and classmates with a set of unique problems.... The advocates of full inclusion speak glibly of giving teachers the training necessary to cope with the immense variety of challenges which handicapped kids bring to the classroom. Yet no amount of training could prepare a regular teacher for Mark. In our experience, the requisite expertise and commitment are found only among teachers who have chosen to specialize in the handicapped.

Puddington concludes his article with a stark warning on the danger of "sabotaging our genuine achievements in the pursuit of worthy-sounding but deeply wrongheaded ideas." Extending civil rights to children like Mark sounds like a fine idea, but how will these children benefit if special programs and special teachers disappear and they are thrust into regular classrooms? And what about the children in the regular classrooms? As the parent of a child with a severe disability, he sees this as a situation in which everyone would lose, and I think he is right.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1996 by Albert Shanker.

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Ron Brown, then the party chairman, and on July 13 to Ann Richards, the chairwoman of the delegation, asking to give a pro-life speech at the convention. He never heard from either one.

Casey also sought to speak against the platform when it was presented for a vote. This wouldn't have entailed a prime-time speech. But in response all he received was a copy of a letter sent by the convention's general counsel to its parliamentarian, explaining that, according to platform committee rules, his request was "out of order." Casey found the perfunctory dismissal demeaning. He calls it "the kind of letter they might have sent Lyndon LaRouche."

Casey's claim that he fell victim to an orchestrated campaign to silence his pro-life views has never been proven and, based on the available evidence, isn't very persuasive. Its currency stems mostly from his indefatigable promulgation of it. Yet the media have accepted the story at face value. At the very least they should be aware that, in so doing, they are playing into Casey's—and the Republicans'—hands. •

Hooray for wiretaps!

TAP DANCE

By Joseph Finder

The July 17 crash of TWA Flight 800, like other acts of terrorism before it, plunged the Clinton administration and Congress into a legislative frenzy. Just before its August recess, the House rushed through a terrorism bill that was laughably weak and useless, its teeth having been extracted by an unholy alliance of ACLU shills, NRA yes-men and other libertarians of the left and right. Worst of all, the bill jettisoned the one provision the White House wanted most: authorization for the expanded use of wiretaps.

As Congress reconvenes, Senators Joe Biden and Orrin Hatch will likely try to succeed where the administration failed. The most crucial (and controversial) provision they're pushing involves "roving," or multipoint, wiretaps—the authority to wiretap several telephones on a single warrant. An ordinary tap covers one telephone line, not the person using it; a roving wiretap enables law-enforcement to tap every phone a person uses. But we're in the age of cellular phones, and our law enforcement, unfortunately is stuck (legally, anyway) in rotary-dial.

Take the hypothetical case of an apartment full of radical Iranian nationals living in Jersey City, plotting to demolish Manhattan. If we simply want to gather intelligence about their activities, we can order the kind of tap allowed by the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. But, once we hear the words "neutron bomb" and "Trump Tower," we're into a criminal investigation. To continue tapping, we have to get a new court order for a "T-3" tap (for Title III of the 1968 Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act). That's not so easy. Each T-3 wiretap has to be approved by a high-level Justice Department official, and then by whichever court has jurisdiction over the venue where the tap would be put in place.

Our terrorists, though, are fairly sophisticated. They assume their home phone is tapped, and so they don't use it to talk business. A couple of years ago, they'd have gone out to the phone booth on the corner, but they've since learned that federal officials can tap pay phones. So they never use the same public phone twice. They know that, if we want to follow them around electronically, we've got to get a separate court order for each phone.

That's why the roving wiretap exception was devised. But, to get a roving tap authorized, the feds have to prove their subject is deliberately trying to evade a wiretap by switching phones. That's hard to prove. An FBI surveillance team might observe a suspect scuttling back and forth between phone booths, but who's to say he isn't using the different phones for some other reason?

Cellular phones make it even harder for law enforcement. The law establishing roving taps was passed in 1986, before cell phones proliferated. These days, a malefactor can readily get a pile of cell phones and pirate their phone numbers and use them all in the privacy of his Jersey City apartment. Good luck proving to a court that he's trying to elude a tap. Unless you have an informant inside the apartment, the burden of proof is insurmountable.

The FBI wants to change the law so that you need to prove only that a person's "actions and conduct" would "have the effect of thwarting interception." Legally, it's much easier right now to bug someone's home than it is to tap his phone, which is curious, given how much more intrusive it is to have a hidden microphone or video camera in your bedroom. The administration simply wants the same legal threshold for roving wiretaps as exists for bugs.

Anyone who insists that giving the FBI slightly enhanced authority to tap cell-phone-wielding terrorists will lead to widespread abuses has no idea how these things actually work. T-3, or law-enforcement, wiretaps must be monitored 'round the clock, not simply recorded to be listened to later. Why? Because, by law, every time a tapped phone is in use, an agent has to listen, and if it's the subject's lawyer on the line, or even the neighborhood video-rental store (i.e., not a criminally related call), the agent must hang up. This practice, called "minimization," is meant to keep the government from listening in on innocent calls.

Which leads to another reason it's unlikely legal wiretaps will become widespread: they're enormously expensive, largely because of the manpower involved. An

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A Message from Negative Population Growth, Inc.

Why Does Our Government Allow Over One Million New Immigrants to Come Here Every Year?

. . . When a Majority of Americans Say We Should Not Admit More Than 100,000 a Year at Most!!

A Roper poll, sponsored by NPG, Inc. and released in February, showed that a majority of Americans (54%) want immigration cut to not more than 100,000 a year. So why does our Federal Government allow more than **ten times that many** to come here every year?

The poll showed that 70% of Americans – **that's over two out of three** – want immigration cut drastically to not over 300,000 a year. How in the world can our government possibly justify an immigration policy that allows **four times that many** to come here every year? Don't our elected representatives have an obligation to heed the clearly expressed wishes of the American public?

The poll also showed that a substantial number of Americans (20%) simply want immigration halted completely. In other words, **one American in five wants no immigration at all.**

We urge Congress, with the vigorous support of President Clinton, to enact legislation that would drastically reduce the present level of immigration, and thus bring our immigration policy into line with the clearly expressed wishes of the overwhelming majority of the American people.

Illegal Immigration - Out of Control

Polls have shown for years that, almost unanimously, Americans want illegal immigration stopped. Despite that, our Federal Government has done very little to reduce illegal immigration, much less stop it. An estimated 350,000 illegal aliens settle here permanently each year. **That is over three times more than the 100,000 a year a majority of Americans favor for total immigration.** These illegal settlers join a pool of an estimated **five to six million** illegal aliens who are already living here permanently in violation of our laws.

The Roper poll cited above showed that 74% of Americans (three out of every four) want illegal aliens identified and deported. So why is our government not doing just that? In 1994 only about 40,000 illegal aliens were deported. A vastly increased program of deportations would not only deter prospective illegal migrants abroad, but also motivate those already here to leave voluntarily.

The Central Issue – Overpopulation

NPG urges a drastic reduction in immigration solely because of its contribution to the disastrous growth of our U.S. population. We are on the path from our present population of 265 million to a population of nearly 500 million by 2100. **More than 90% of that growth will be the direct result of post-2000 immigration.**

Immigration is the driving force behind the population growth that is devastating our environment and the quality of our lives. **Primarily because of immigration we are rushing at breakneck speed toward an environmental and economic disaster.**

U.S. Population Size – A Vitally Important National Issue

Other things being equal, **our population size determines our impact on our already over-stressed environment and increasingly scarce resources. The size of our population is, therefore, a vitally important national issue.**

If we are to have any hope at all of creating an economy that will be sustainable indefinitely, in a sound and healthy environment, with an adequate standard of living for all, we need a smaller, not a larger, U.S. population. **But we will never be able to achieve a smaller population unless we reduce immigration to a small fraction of its present level. That is a simple fact.**

Isn't there someone among our political leaders who is willing to recognize the need for a smaller U.S.population and for public policies to achieve it? He or she would have the support of a majority of Americans. The Roper poll cited above showed that 54% of Americans believe that our country is already overpopulated.

NPG is a nonprofit, national membership organization established in 1972. Contributions to NPG are tax deductible to the extent the law allows.

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ordinary wiretap costs an average of $73,000. A roving tap can cost more than $130,000. The ACLU often complains about the cost of wiretaps, but it neglects to mention that it's the protection of our civil liberties that makes them so expensive. That expense is a major reason that the federal government, in the thousands of investigations it conducts each year, uses no more than 600 wiretaps. As for roving taps, last year there were exactly four: two for narcotics investigations and two for kidnapping. Given the cost, making them easier to get is unlikely to mean many more.

And the punishment for violating wiretap laws is so onerous that the FBI would much sooner err on the side of caution than risk slipping up. Anyone who orders or participates in an illegal tap, has any knowing involvement of it, or unlawfully discloses information obtained from a tap can go to jail for ten years. The threat of jail time can make a bureaucrat awfully punctilious.

In fact, no federal law-enforcement official has ever been prosecuted for a wiretap violation. The ACLU's two favorite examples of the FBI's abuse of power—COINTELPRO, the bureau's illegal program of intelligence-gathering and disruption against "subversives" during the 1960s and early '70s, and the creepy campaign by rogue FBI agents against the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador in the early '80s—never involved wiretap violations.

I'm too cynical to say abuses never occur. But if they do they're pretty rare. If you assume good faith on the part of our law-enforcement agencies, proper supervision by the Justice Department, sound judicial review and congressional oversight, then the slightly expanded authority the White House wants isn't a civil-liberties concern. If you don't believe the Justice Department, Congress and the courts are adequate safeguards, then there shouldn't be any wiretaps at all, which is, by the way, the ACLU's position.

The chief reason, though, that Congress is so averse to expanded taps is the plummeting credibility of the FBI. Already sullied by the bloody sieges at Ruby Ridge and Waco (both of which have become totemic to the black-helicopter crowd), the bureau under Director Louis Freeh seems to harbor more than a tinge of J. Edgar Hooverism. Witness the various, appalling Filegate blunders. And there's the egregious case of Richard Jewell, the security guard whom the FBI suspected of planting the bomb at the Atlanta Olympics. Whether or not he did it, his persecution was a gruesome illustration of the FBI's power to destroy a person based on a mere hunch. It wasn't exactly reassuring to hear an Atlanta FBI agent declare, "We never apologize." There's no question the FBI bears extremely close monitoring. Then again, as the ACLU and its ilk seem to forget, so do the terrorists.

JOSEPH FINDER writes frequently on intelligence and international affairs and is the author most recently of the novel *The Zero Hour* (William Morrow).

Liberals, alive and well.

OLDIES BUT GOODIES

By Sean Wilentz

Beneath a bright but not oppressive midday sun, four hours before the Democrats officially opened their convention in Chicago, the AFL-CIO held a spirited rally outside the State of Illinois Building on Randolph Street. A small sea of red-T-shirted organizers and rank-and-filers cheered John Sweeney, the federation's new president. Martin Luther King III spoke affectingly about his father's ties to organized labor. At the rally's close, the crowd sang the old union anthem, "Solidarity Forever"—and people appeared to know the lyrics. For an hour or so, in the heart of the Loop, the Democratic Party's traditional labor-liberal spirit seemed undimmed.

A different sort of sentimentalism held sway that evening inside the United Center. The other sentimentalism was better suited to New Democratic, edge-city tastes, epitomized by the music of this era's Mantovani, Kenny G, the banal, treacly saxophonist admired by the president. Still, outside of the convention hall, in and around the downtown hotels, one kept bumping into throngs of die-hard party liberals and leftists.

It was oldies but goodies time. On Sunday, '60s veterans and wannabes gathered at McCormick Place to hail the surviving members of the Chicago Eight and to revel in what could in this context only be called period music: Crosby, Stills and Nash, Bonnie Raitt, Jackson Browne and the millionth cast of *Hair*. (Or was it the first cast of *Rent*? No, that was later.) On Monday, *Tikkun* magazine attracted more than 200 delegates, alternates, reporters and hangers-on to a late-afternoon panel discussion on the politics of meaning (bad ideas never die; they become panel discussions). An impressive slice of the liberal intelligentsia, along with some high-level Washington officials, turned out for *The American Prospect*'s party at the Chicago Historical Society. And clogging the hotel lobbies, alongside the lipsticked ladies with their donkey hats and the silk-suited gentlemen with their darting eyes, were trade unionists, feminists and gay activists, whose presence confirmed that this was, yes, a Democratic national convention.

The striking thing about the liberals in Chicago, however, was not their ubiquity but their composure. It was widely assumed that President Clinton's signing of the Republican-crafted welfare bill had severely alien-

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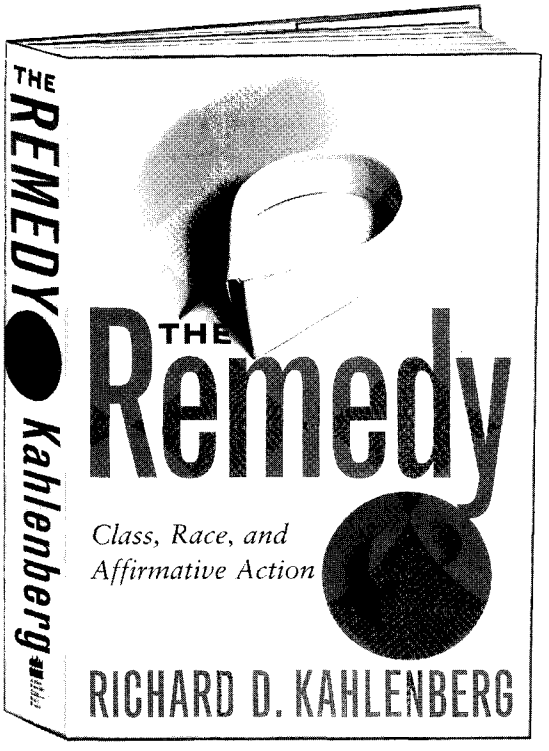

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ated the party's liberal wing. Some pundits expected the alienation would surface at the convention meetings, and here and there it did. In their Tuesday night speeches, old lions Jesse Jackson and Mario Cuomo admitted to their misgivings about welfare reform and then became unstinting in their support of the ticket. Prominent congressional liberals expressed the utmost confidence that the president, if re-elected, would move leftward.

In part, the liberals' acquiescence reflects their rapid political decline, particularly since 1994. Had the Democrats retained control of the House two years ago, Clinton might well have faced a primary challenge from his left, say from Jackson, and the party would have entered its 1996 convention as badly divided as it was in 1980. "Newt Gingrich and the freshman class turned out to be President Clinton's greatest gift," departing Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder told me in Chicago—and Democratic liberals, with no choice but to back the lesser of two evils, learned to suffer in silence.

In other respects, though, the liberals' unruffled demeanor suggests they have begun a recovery. The difficulties of the past four years have certainly diminished the rage for moral purity that has long plagued their politics. "Liberals realize that throwing a tantrum over the welfare bill isn't going to help any poor people," Barney Frank remarked to me between convention sessions. Consistently, Democratic liberals hewed to the convention script, winning points by showing that they, too, could be good soldiers.

Not that everything was sweetness and light. In a taxicab departing from the convention hall, a congenial Midwestern congressional candidate complained that his Republican rival had seized upon his opposition to the welfare bill to paint him as a radical out of touch with his own party leader. And those liberal Democrats who came of age in the 1960s still quietly hanker for a revival of the protest politics that the rest of the country dismisses as subversion or kitsch.

According to Schroeder, for example, the decline of organized peace groups after the end of the cold war helps to explain, a little paradoxically, why there's so little pressure these days to prune the defense budget. She drew a bleak picture of the current political scene: of a White House commanded by narrow technocrats, a Congress paralyzed by petty ambitions, a citizenry that sees government as a sort of spiritual toxic waste dump. Clinton's re-election is important, she added, if only as an alternative to unfettered Republican rule. In a second term, she surmised, the president, goaded by Mrs. Clinton, might secure his historical legacy. "But what will that be?" she wondered. "That he got half a loaf for the American people? Or a third of the loaf? Or even that much?"

Perhaps because he is not a whole-loafer, Barney Frank is more sanguine (which may be why he's staying in Congress for a second Clinton term.) "The public is ready now for a safety net for the middle class," he told me, "something not just for the poor, but for everyone who will need help, from time to time, in order to own a home, educate their kids, keep themselves healthy or have something to retire on." Americans, he explained, have realized that today, unlike thirty years ago, relatively few of us can expect to go through life with one stable job—a lesson, he contended, underscored by the effects of corporate downsizing. Consequently, voters will look to the federal government to do more on their behalf, not all the time but at critical moments, such as when buying a home or sending a kid to college.

Frank thinks the public will pay for this rediscovered largesse with cuts in military spending ("We need to talk about burden sharing, about how we've propped up some of our strongest economic competitors with military spending," he said. "I could sell it politically in a minute.") He even thinks that the Republicans' mania for budget balancing will eventually force them to stop building new costly weapons as well. "It's a zero-sum game now. We're at the point where we have to make choices. And, in the end, a balanced budget really plays into our hands."

Is this likely? Perhaps not. Perhaps Frank is simply bluffing. But, if liberal paragons like him fear deep down that they've been consigned to the dustbin of history, they're doing a good job of hiding it. Despite the Democratic frustration and fratricide of Bill Clinton's first four years, four years in which liberals were blamed for his early failures and grimaced at his late successes, the party's left is plausibly making a claim on the future. As everyone knows, conventions, and politics in general, are about turning illusion into truth. Besides, the dustbin's numbers have been pretty good lately. •

The African American love-in.

BLACK OUT

By Matthew Cooper

"Jack Kemp has the best black Rolodex in the country," Maynard Jackson says over the din of the crowd at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. The former Atlanta mayor worked closely with Kemp, when Jackson ran the South's black Mecca and Kemp headed the Department of Housing and Urban Development. "We talked all the time," Jackson says, his once-enormous frame slimmed by hours with a personal trainer. But Jackson, like many black officials here, is dubious that Kemp, even with his history of

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reaching out to minorities, even with his personal friendships with many pols here, can loosen the Democratic hold on black voters. This is especially true, Jackson says, since Kemp modified his positions on affirmative action and immigration. "That Jack Kemp no longer exists," Jackson says. "There's a new Kemp out there."

It would be tempting to dismiss Jackson's disparaging remarks as the spin of a partisan Democrat. But the selection of Kemp seems to have done little to sway black voters from their allegiance to Bill Clinton and his party. According to the Joint Center for Political Studies, which specializes in African American politics, some 82 percent of blacks remain Democrats. Recent polling by Ron Lester, a Democratic consultant who is black himself, showed Dole only getting about 4 percent of the black vote before the GOP convention and the exact same percentage after naming Kemp. "It hasn't even been a blip," Lester says.

Forces of attraction and repulsion seem to be shaping the black vote. On the repulsion side is Newt Gingrich and the GOP Congress. Despite the Speaker's attempts to reach out to minorities—he quoted Martin Luther King in his San Diego speech and, more substantively, slowed the progress of anti-affirmative action legislation in the House—he remains terribly unpopular among African Americans, as he does generally. Only 15.6 percent of blacks polled by the Joint Center thought favorably of Gingrich, while an astounding 87.6 percent thought favorably of Clinton. Blacks also remain the segment of the electorate most favorably disposed to government. The GOP's harsh anti-government rhetoric has only strengthened a Democratic predisposition that dates to the New Deal.

On the attraction side of the ledger, Clinton has done as much to court the black vote as any president ever. His aggressive affirmative action in appointments—four blacks were named to the Cabinet—carried a symbolic weight. His Southern roots help, too, since the majority of blacks still live in the South. And Clinton's personal ease among blacks and his knack for the cultural gesture—belting blues on his saxophone or chowing on barbecue—have clearly helped him. At the meeting in Chicago of the Democratic Party's African American caucus, one speaker's claim that Clinton understands black problems not just intellectually "but from the neck down, with his heart" met with huge applause.

Not even vigorous campaigning by Colin Powell would be likely to make any difference. All signs suggest it would help more among whites than blacks. (Powell's positive rating among blacks, according to the Joint Center, is 68 percent—lower than Clinton's.) Powell was not universally lauded among blacks at this convention. When Representative Jesse Jackson Jr., son of the erstwhile presidential candidate, addressed the caucus, he took direct aim at Powell. "Someone who looked like us got up there and thanked Reagan for spending more on the military," Jackson said, to derisive laughter.

To keep the black turnout high this fall, the party is planning its most energetic effort yet to reach out to minority voters. The so-called African American working group, an informal team of top black political officials in the Clinton administration and the Democratic National Committee, has been working on extensive plans to reach blacks. A major print ad campaign has been designed by a black-led ad agency. The stark black-and-white ads, which will fly below the radar of the mainstream media, will appear this fall in black publications such as *Jet* and *Black Elegance*. Democrats are also planning massive ad buys on black radio stations in the nation's top twenty-five media markets and on a black Internet site called Net Noir.

Yet there's less of a sense among blacks than in the past that the party is beholden to this most loyal of constituencies. Though there was grumbling here about the welfare bill President Clinton signed, there was also a willingness to suppress that animus for the sake of party unity. On affirmative action, though, the party remains untransformed. The platform endorses affirmative action in the strongest terms. Press releases from the convention's organizing committee boast of the percentage of "persons of color" who have been appointed to top slots. The party still has rigid mathematical formulas for the composition of each state's delegation. There is no sign that practice will change.

The party's attachment to group rights was certainly apparent at a forum hosted by Bill Bradley at Chicago's Field Museum. Billed as a "conversation on race" it involved an ever-earnest Bradley leading a panel of literati, including the novelists Toni Morrison and Richard Ford. When Harvard Professor Cornel West, a panelist, mocked the idea of "a whole new discussion about color-blindness," the crowd roared with approval. Other moments in the discussion showed how deeply identity politics have permeated the party. The novelist Bharati Mukherjee complained about her experiences living in Iowa City. Did she suffer catcalls and harassment there? No. But, she told the crowd, she was angered in retrospect when people *complimented* her on her beautiful saris. "I didn't know enough to realize I was being exoticized," she said. "Because I was so pliant then I didn't know how to take offense."

It may seem impossible to imagine a time when the Democratic Party will be less infused by such thinking; it may seem equally hard to imagine a GOP that's less white bread. But it's worth remembering that between 1944 and 1964 black identification with the GOP ranged between 23 and 39 percent. If it were possible to regain those numbers, everyone would win. There would be a more moderate GOP, a more sensible Democratic Party, and blacks themselves would be genuine swing voters, courted with the same fervor that Catholics, Californians and other constituencies now enjoy. Though most black Democrats still won't acknowledge the obvious benefits to all of a strong black voice in the GOP, a few did. "I don't think Kemp will be effective" at wooing blacks, says the Reverend Benjamin Hooks, the former head of the NAACP. "But it would obviously benefit both parties." Amen. •

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Missing in action in Chechnya.

MOTHERS IN ARMS

By Masha Gessen

The milestones of our journey were the things that should have been left unsaid. Liudmila and I were headed to Grozny to find her son, a Russian soldier missing in action. At the boarding gate, a large Chechen woman dressed in black flashed us a hospitable smile. "You going for a funeral, too?" A bit earlier, a member of the Russian Soldiers' Mothers Committee who had helped ready Liudmila for the trip warned us, "You know, we just had a mother disappear. Her son came back, but the mother's dead." Later, at the Grozny airport, yet another woman helpfully offered, "Don't worry about your son. If the Chechens have him, he's safe and sound. I mean, he's not a contractor, is he?" By contractor, she meant the sort of soldier who enlists in the military voluntarily, as opposed to conscripts. When Chechen fighters take prisoners, they usually spare the conscripts but often execute the contractors. Liudmila's son is a contractor.

In March, Liudmila first learned he was missing in action. Four months later, she received a letter. "Mama, don't you worry," it said. "I have been held prisoner more than a month already." Within a week Liudmila was on a plane for the first time in her life, headed for Grozny. Since the beginning of the war, dozens if not hundreds of other mothers have been summoned to Chechnya by similar letters. For until recently it was the rebels' practice to release their captives to their mothers.

In Grozny, Liudmila, acting on the Soldiers' Mothers Committee's tip, located the office of the quasi-independent Chechen Search Team. It was a tiny room where the walls were adorned with photographs of recently exhumed human remains still in need of identification. Between five and twenty equally helpless Chechen women would gather there daily.

As part of a June cease-fire, the Russians and Chechens had agreed to return all prisoners, as well as the bodies of enemy soldiers. They traded lists of MIAs, too: 1,119 Russians and 1,322 Chechens. But only fifty prisoners at most were swapped before fighting resumed in August. The Russians didn't know where to begin looking for the Chechen MIAs. Hundreds were probably killed in camps; the Chechens claim many were shipped off to lengthy prison sentences in the Russian hinterlands. Chechen men continue to disappear, and their mothers continue their search.

Through these mothers, the warring sides share a monstrous kind of postal system, of which Liudmila's letter was just one hallmark. Another came from Ruslan Saytayev, a 17-year-old Chechen. On May 14, Saytayev went to his father's grave to say a traditional memorial prayer. While he was at the cemetery, federal troops initiated a "passport check." Saytayev doesn't have a passport because he reached adulthood after all the bureaucratic institutions in Chechnya had been immobilized by the war.

As he stood at the cemetery thinking of a way to get home, Saytayev was snatched by several federal soldiers, loaded into a tank and delivered to a nearby village. After a day of beatings he and another prisoner were thrown into a helicopter and then tossed off—literally—at Khankala, a Russian military base just outside of Grozny. There, Saytayev says, he spent eight or nine days blindfolded and handcuffed to two other prisoners. Once in the morning and once at night they were beaten. Sometimes the Russians made the prisoners stand in a grave-depth pit and threw stones at them.

On about the fifth day, Saytayev's blindfold and handcuffs were temporarily removed so he could write a letter dictated to him by a federal officer: "Mama, things are bad. Where I am now, they think I am a Dudayev spy, and they'll only let me go if they can get one officer or two soldiers that we've had for not less than a year." By the time the letter was delivered, Saytayev's 24-year-old sister, Asya, had pleaded with every conceivable federal authority for information about her brother, but to no avail. The letter-carrier, acting as a go-between, helped Asya negotiate the price from one officer down to 5 million rubles—about $1,000.

Once the deal was made, Asya Saytayev waited several days for Ruslan at the designated checkpoint. Finally, the go-between asked, "Will you recognize your brother?" A young man, barefoot and dressed in rags, his face covered with a scarf, his hands tied behind his back, then appeared. Asya recognized his hair. He could barely stand. One of his kidneys had failed from beatings. Two more prisoners were brought out. "I couldn't even stand to look at them," she says. "Their ribs were broken, and they had to be picked up and laid into cars."

The Saytayevs lucked out. Most of the Chechen MIAs

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are probably dead. Grozny is full of horror stories about the ways Russians have disposed of unaccounted bodies: throwing them off helicopters into mountain glaciers, burning them, soaking the remains in a chemical solution that dissolves the flesh and then burying the bones. The Chechen Search Team has found 108 mass-burial sites in the tiny republic. Team members have so far opened sixty-seven of them, exhuming 921 bodies, of which 426 have been identified.

In May 1995, three young brothers from one of the larger Chechen towns disappeared. Their uncle, the deputy head of the regional administration, launched a concerted campaign, printing flyers and placing announcements on Chechen TV. At the checkpoint where the three brothers had been killed at an officer's whim, the soldiers shook in fear that all the publicity would invite a command inspection.

Two months after the killing, one of the conscripts, unable to live with the fear of being discovered, decided to run. After three days, "Sasha" found the victims' family. He took them to the site where he had helped bury and then pave over the three boys. Sasha feared reprisal, but the men of the family said they didn't see him, a conscript, as culpable. "If they'd been my relatives," the rosy-cheeked soldier admitted, "I couldn't have been forgiving like that."

Three weeks after his confession, at Sasha's request, the victims' relatives bribed a lieutenant colonel to send him back to Russia proper. The next thing Sasha knew he was in a holding cell in the basement of the federal troops' Grozny headquarters. The water in the cell came up to his knees. He was interrogated a couple of times and maintained that he had been taken prisoner. A week later he and the other inmates were moved into "autozaks"—trucks converted into mobile cages.

Three weeks later, Sasha convinced a guard to let him go to the toilet and made a break for it. Miraculously, he managed to bypass federal checkpoints, get out of Grozny and board a bus to the Chechen family's town. "They were glad to see me. They said, 'Well, since you came back, we are not letting you go again.' " A year later, Sasha converted to Islam and decided not to return to Russia. "You see the way people live here, compared to how they live back there," he explained, making a circular gesture about the opulent house in which he now lives. Back in his Siberian hometown, he shared a shack with five siblings, his peasant mother and unemployed electrician stepfather. "I smoked in front of my mother and drank vodka with my stepfather every day." In the strict Chechen Muslim tradition, such behavior is not tolerated, a practice that led Sasha to conclude, "Here people lead cleaner lives."

Liudmila, meanwhile, settled down at the Russian military base at Khankala. She joined about sixty relatives of MIAs—mostly mothers, some of whom had been there for a year and a half. Intensely fearful of the Chechens, the women exchanged rumors about parents who dared step off the base and were immediately killed by the rebels. The women themselves traveled only in groups and left the search to others. Every day at 4:30, a member of the military Search Department would gather the relatives outside his building and announce he had no news about the MIAs.

At Khankala, I met Misha Smirnov, a 19-year-old who had been stationed in Chechnya for a week before walking right into the hands of resistance fighters. He was questioned for a couple of days, until his captors became convinced he knew nothing. He then settled into a mellow routine alongside his captors. The house where he ended up probably served as a partisan base: Misha never saw any women, but different men were always coming and going. After a while, he was getting along with the fighters, often cooking meals for them.

One day they presented him with heartbreaking news. "They said they tried to set up an exchange, but they won't even give dead bodies in exchange for privates, and they said that for me the feds wouldn't even give a woman." The mothers at Khankala found this story easy to believe: they had seen Chechen representatives come to offer to return some conscripts whose term of service had expired, but the local commander had said he wasn't interested.

After six weeks in captivity, having realized that no one was going to do anything to secure his release, Misha decided to run—or, rather, since no one was guarding him—to walk. After walking for two nights (he hid during the day) he asked an old Russian woman for help. The babushka deposited Misha at her own apartment and went to a nearby base to ask someone to come pick up the soldier. A week later, no one had come. She went again, this time armed with a pleading letter from Misha. In another week, she finally delivered Misha herself. For a week, Misha was worked over by military police and the secret police.

"They kept saying they'd execute me and then say I'd lost my weapon or that I worked for the Chechens. This is when I remembered the fighters' words: 'If you end up among your own, they'll shoot you.' " Misha wished he had just stayed with the Chechens and waited for his mother to arrive.

Then suddenly he was released to Khankala. No one told him what he was supposed to do, so he moved into the parents' barracks. His own battalion never sent for him. "I'm not going to war," he declared. "I lived with the Chechens. They never hurt me, and they fed me, and we slept in the same house. No way am I going to shoot at them. Anyway, I don't see this army really needs me."

As with most of the thousands who have disappeared in this war, the only person who really needs Misha is his mother. Who knows? She may have received the letter his captors claimed to have written. She may now be looking for him in Chechnya, like the hundreds of other women whose desperate search will continue for months and years after this savage, pointless war is over.

MASHA GESSEN's book *Dead Again: The Russian Intelligentsia After Communism* is due out from Verso in 1997.

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THE DEMOCRATS, INC.

By Michael Lewis

August 19:

One moment I'm sleeping soundly in my hotel room in San Diego, the next the phone is ringing and a voice on the other end of the line is asking, "This is the vice president's office, can you take the call?" Al Gore himself is on the line. In a moment of weakness, thinking that maybe I should interview someone important, I had sent a message to Gore's office saying I wanted to speak with him. I hardly expected him to take it seriously. "It's nerve-wracking getting a call from the vice president," I say. Gore chuckles unhappily; I've made him uncomfortable. "No, seriously," I say. "This is the highest I've climbed in the world." This merely makes things worse. "I don't believe that at all," he says, nervously, attempting to maneuver me back into some acceptable mode of political discourse.

I have only five minutes of interview time, and two of them are now gone. I'm (sort of) curious to know if Gore's environmentalism has, as it appears, vanished down the sinkhole of practical politics. But the vice president's conversation is littered with franklys and to-be-honest-with-yous and it-is-my-understandings, all of which translate into civilian English as "I'm never going to tell you the truth about anything, so why on earth are you asking?" So I ask him elliptically if he's spoken to anyone in the Green Party since he's taken office. He has not, which probably goes some way to explaining why the Green Party likens him to Judas. I'm not going to get much more out of him, however. Before he hangs up Gore tells me that (a) Americans truly are committed to nature; (b) he's not more intimidated having to debate Jack Kemp than having to debate, say, Connie Mack; and (c) the collection of speeches written by White House speechwriters and now published as a book by Bill Clinton, *Between Hope and History*, was penned entirely by Clinton himself. It is his understanding, Gore says.

August 26 & 27:

Your first day at a convention is like your first day at school: upon seeing the hordes your first instinct is that something important is happening, that everyone must know something you don't. For a few hours I am engaged in a wild, undignified scramble to find out what that something is. During this uncomfortable period all sorts of information lands on my lap—a stack of old articles from *Chicago* magazine, drafts of speeches by retired congressmen, lists of delegates—stuff no one in his right mind would read. But nothing can be ignored; I even interview a delegate. But then there is this tremendous noise on one side of the convention hall, a spontaneous outbreak of whistles and cheers that draws all attention to the entrance beneath the Nevada delegation. The sound is exactly what you would expect if a billionaire were handing out sacks of cash, or if a woman were performing a striptease. I plow through the crowd.

It is Al Gore.

A normal person might well wonder what 15,000 journalists are doing covering an event of dubious importance. It's not an easy question. The journalists who write about other journalists, like Howie Kurtz of *The Washington Post*, write about the futility of being a journalist at the Democratic convention. (The *Post*, I'm told, has as many people here as in all their foreign bureaus combined.) The famous journalists invert their occupation and give interviews to other journalists, like Kurtz. The rest of us are resigned to finding some nugget slightly different from the nuggets of others. My friend Joel Achenbach of *The Post*, for instance, scored the scoop of the day by persuading Tipper Gore to take him jogging with her along Lake Michigan. Since both Joel and Tipper live in Washington, it's a little strange for them to have flown to Chicago to construct a newspaper article about jogging together. But no matter.

It turns out few of the journalists actually attend the convention, except during prime time. The journalists remain in tents outside the United Center. In the first two days, between 3:30 in the afternoon and 7:00 at night, only a few dozen people pass through the section of the hall reserved for the "periodical press." This is a shame, because the best time to be in the hall is when no one is paying much attention. Hillary Clinton pops in mid-afternoon to check the mike levels and the height of the podium. She steps up in her pink suit and, when she sees that it's the wrong height, kicks off her pink heels. She stands there girlishly in her stockinged feet, asking too many questions of the men around her, and you can see that, like everyone else who plays her adamantine role, she is far more

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vulnerable than she lets on.

Even after the convention begins, no one pays it much heed. (People appear briefly like mayflies during prime time.) So when Dick Gephardt speaks I am able to crawl right up behind him on the platform and see what life looks like from the speaker's point of view. Essentially, life looks predetermined. The speaker stares into four prompters: one at his left shoulder, another at his right shoulder, a third mounted straight ahead of him across the hall just beneath the cameras (so that he can appear to be looking at you when you are watching him on TV). The fourth is embedded into the podium just above his navel. His speech—in letters four inches high, like the text of a book for the elderly—scrolls gently across. Gephardt only has to swivel back and forth between the prompters to pretend not to be reading word-for-word, which he is. "We meet here to offer a vision, not just a show for television," he is saying.

No wonder no one listens! Part of the thrill of watching a public speaker lies in the risk the speaker takes in putting himself before you. The magic microseconds between a speaker's thoughts and his exact words keep his audience on some subtle edge about what might be coming next. Jesse Jackson for one understands this: in the first two days he alone shuts down the prompters and speaks from loose notes, and he alone fully engages the crowd. It is the very moment that Jackson abandons his notes and struggles to mold words around his ideas ("Gingrich had to do a volleyball match, and Trent Lott had to sing a song; we here can speak our minds") that he first brings the crowd to its feet.

But Jackson is the exception. The ordinary convention speech contains no risk. It arises not out of the need of the speaker to say something important but out of the speaker's desire to have delivered a speech at the convention, to establish his position in the official structure of the Democratic Party.

The only exceptions to this rule are the speeches designed to make people cry. The constant parade of personal tragedy signals to the delegates, the cameras and most of the journalists that they should respond with synchronized nods and similar expressions of pain. Ron Brown's widow, Jim Brady's wife and Christopher Reeve are of course well-known victims. The speeches delivered by relative unknowns in the wee hours of the afternoon contain wagonloads more of the same. Here is a representative sample of opening lines, snatched in a single pass of the press table:

"As the father of a child brutally murdered by a habitual, violent criminal.... "

"As many of you know, my husband ... was a former tobacco lobbyist who died this past March.... "

"December 7, 1993. That was the day a man with a semiautomatic weapon boarded the train ... my husband was one of those killed."

Say what you will about this technique for eliciting public sympathy. (Should we be more inclined to vote for Bill Clinton because an actor who fell off a horse speaks at his convention?) But once you start dealing indiscriminately in tragic sentiments it's hard to keep feelings running high. By early in the second day, people's capacity to absorb bad news has dwindled to nothing. A pleasant middle-aged woman describes the recent death of her husband from lung cancer, for instance, and no one in the hall pays her any mind. It is an incongruous sight: a woman in bright yellow on the verge of tears as she relates her tragic loss over the loud hum from the audience below, most of which is engrossed in small talk and hot dogs.

Raising my binoculars (necessary equipment) from the floor to the ceiling, I can't help noticing something: the higher you get, the whiter the people get. Almost all the black people are on the floor. The faces in the skyboxes are lily-white.

At the end of the first evening I make my way up to the skyboxes. The skyboxes at the convention, it turns out, are much like the skyboxes at the Bulls games. They have been reserved by the DNC for the rich people and their companies who can afford to pay for them. These include some of the seventy-two CEOs, many of them Republicans, who coughed up $100,000 each to be an honorary vice chairman of the Democratic convention. Here, near the money and the cameras, is where *Weekly Standard* editor Bill Kristol kibitzes with Senator Joe Lieberman. Here is where you see curtained-off rooms decorated with signs that say: THE DCCC WOULD LIKE TO THANK ESPECIALLY THE CHICAGO BOARD OPTIONS EXCHANGE AND PATTON, BOGGS, LLB. The people here sit sipping red wine and nibbling on goodies, looking down upon the politicians who will have no choice tomorrow but to take their calls.

By now pretty much everyone has left. But inside one of the many suites toils a middle-aged woman in a black-and-white penguin suit. For maybe half an hour the woman works alone, tossing out opened but untouched bottles of wine, dumping large silver trays of food into giant green trash bags. The food tumbles into the bag in mouth-watering heaps: chicken and beef satay, fried potato puff balls, shrimp rémoulade, thinly sliced meats rolled up like oriental carpets. "This was one of the rooms reserved for the White House staff," the woman says, idly. "They never came. But they never called to cancel." That's when you know you've arrived in the Democratic Party, I think, when you don't even care to use your reserved suite. When I watched George Stephanopoulos in a Chicago health club earlier today, reading the newspaper as the convention unfolded on the TV above his head, I didn't appreciate what I was seeing. The coolest thing to be at the Democratic convention is a no-show.

I'm curious what the woman is being paid to chuck out thousands of dollars of untouched food. Instead, I ask more generally about salaries at the United Center. "You mean, what do I make?" she asks, cheerfully, as she empties a cow's worth of beef satay into the garbage. "Four bucks an hour." •

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BEYOND THE CLINTON PRESIDENCY

By John B. Judis

CHICAGO

The Democratic convention, like the Republican convention before it, erected the façade of a happy and harmonious party, united behind its nominee. But underneath the show of solidarity in Chicago lay divisions as wide and deep as those between Pat Buchanan and Bill Weld. These rifts could lead to a nasty fight in four years over the Democratic presidential nomination and might even presage a realignment between the parties themselves. Or their resolution could suggest a new kind of Democratic politics altogether.

Almost every Democratic politician or liberal interest group has its own agenda, but two factions stand out: the "New Democrats," led by the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC); and a more variegated, less defined set of "economic nationalists" or "populists" identified most clearly with the Democratic House leadership. These two factions diverge not only in their ideologies but in their preferred candidates for 2000—Vice President Al Gore for the New Democrats, House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt for the economic nationalists.

At the convention itself, the two groups' differences took subtle forms: one DLC leader talked of "Al Gore's re-election," while a left-wing congressman told a meeting of union delegates, "The most important vote is going to be to elect the next Speaker of the House." Much starker articulations of these factions' differences emerge, however, from the manifestos, speeches and bills that they produced over the past year, before the election silenced open strife.

In 1985 Al From and Will Marshall, two Democratic staffers, founded the DLC to provide a counterweight to the Democratic National Committee, which they believed to be in thrall to the same interests—from the AFL-CIO to the Rainbow Coalition—that had doomed Walter Mondale's candidacy the year before. The DLC was at first an eclectic group of Southern moderates, Northern neo-liberals and Democratic business lobbyists. It played an important role in the party, championing Super Tuesday, for instance, as a means of enhancing Southern influence during the presidential primary season. By the late '80s, however, under the chairmanship of Sam Nunn, Chuck Robb and Bill Clinton, and with an infusion of new ideas from David Osborne, William Galston and Elaine Kamarck, the DLC developed a distinct political outlook of its own.

The DLC promoted new policy approaches that included national service, welfare reform, reinventing government and managed competition in health care. By favoring the death penalty and embracing workfare, the organization also sought, in From's words, to "inoculate" Democrats against charges that they ignored middle-class values. These themes and programs permeated Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign, but the DLC won few top jobs in the administration. And, although Clinton adopted some DLC initiatives such as national service, he rejected its advice to push welfare reform before health care reform. Only after the November 1994 election debacle did Clinton, working with political consultant Richard Morris, turn more explicitly to a DLC agenda.

Though From and Marshall regard Morris himself, who had no contact with the DLC until last year, as a brilliant operator but not a reliable ally, they are pleased with Clinton's shift. At a DLC dinner during the convention, From extolled the party platform, which was written by former DLCers Kamarck and Bruce Reed. "We have changed the ideology. There is a new ideology," From declared. "The party has learned to talk the talk. Now it has to learn to walk the walk."

Last year, the DLC began developing a strategy to endure beyond the Clinton presidency. They called it the "third way"—between the old Democratic liberalism and the new Republican conservatism. From distinguished this approach from Morris's strategy of "triangulation." "Triangulation is fine, but not enough," From told me. "It goes halfway." Where triangulation is a strategy of political positioning, From intends the third way to be a distinct set of ideas. "I believe we can develop an ideology for the dominant party," he said.

On the eve of the convention, From and Marshall, aided by two former Clinton officials, Galston and Doug Ross, unveiled this new ideology in a document called "The New Progressive Declaration: A Political Philosophy for the Information Age." Much more than the DLC's earlier statements, it is a manifesto for a new politics, not simply a position paper. It is directed not at 1996 but at the debates that will begin after November. Philosophically, it also marks a departure for the DLC. It blends a neo-Jeffersonian emphasis on local and state

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initiative, a communitarian view of social responsibility and a Toffleresque theory of emerging post-industrial society.

This vision rests on an analogy with the old Progressive era. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the U.S. was transformed from a mainly agricultural, small-scale capitalism to an industrial, urban corporate capitalism. The Progressives sought to use the power of government to preserve liberty and equality within this new industrial order. Today the DLC claims it is shaping American political institutions to a new "Information Age."

Like Alvin Toffler's *The Third Wave*, the manifesto foresees an era in which "global markets undercut" government's ability to dictate economic outcomes, while "the information revolution" tends "to diffuse power from large, hierarchical institutions." Remote corporate structures give way to local businesses run cooperatively by workers and managers. To adapt to this new order, the DLC urges corporations to replace "the adversarial view of labor-management relations with a more flexible and collaborative organization of work." Most workers will ultimately become independent contractors who change jobs easily. "Our new economic strategy ... must lessen worker dependence on big institutions and provide new opportunities to take charge of their own bottom line."

Although government can help ease the "economic anxiety" and "social disintegration" that this transformation will wreak, the DLC says, government will have to change in order to do so. Government should mimic the post-industrial structures of the Information Age. "The new model decentralizes power, expands individual choice and injects public competition into the delivery of public goods and services," the DLC writes. For example, the DLC would replace federally run worker-retraining programs with vouchers workers can use on private programs. In addressing urban ghettos, the DLC prefers "community-led development and individual empowerment" to traditional liberal subsidies. It wants to foster a sense of personal responsibility for poverty and to link public benefits to public work. Social Security, meanwhile, would give way to a system that lets individuals invest their own retirement income.

This set of ideas has evolved since the mid-'80s, when Robb and Nunn chaired the DLC and the organization stressed a muscular nationalism centered on a strong defense and national service. But the DLC's new manifesto devotes only a short section to foreign policy and a mere sentence to national service. Though it strongly backed NAFTA and GATT, the DLC dispenses with international economic policy in just two paragraphs and a vague call for "more effective multilateral institutions."

The DLC's new program closely resembles that of the Progress and Freedom Foundation, which Newt Gingrich helped start and which reflects Toffler's influence. But the Progress and Freedom Foundation assumes the transition to post-industrial society will by itself solve many economic and social ills; it believes government should speed this transition through deregulation. The DLC believes "the market's 'invisible hand' cannot create equal opportunity, or defend civil rights or renew our civic culture."

Although the DLC ideology has won over many governors and state officials, Washington lobbyists and Wall Street Democrats, it has not taken hold among congressional Democrats or the interest groups that furnished the bulk of the delegates to this convention. (The unions alone provided about a fourth of the elected delegates.) Most state delegations represented at the United Center were dominated either by "old Democrats," to use the DLC term, or economic populist-nationalists.

Economic populism has been around the Democratic Party since 1828, but the current combination of nationalism and populism dates from Richard Gephardt's 1988 presidential campaign. Gephardt based his campaign on the "Gephardt Amendment," a measure that penalized countries that ran trade surpluses with the U.S. Adherents of this politics are scattered through Congress, Washington think tanks, the AFL-CIO and environmental and citizen action organizations. There is, however, no single DLC-like organization that embodies this economic nationalism.

Like the New Democrats, the economic nationalists have been critical of Clinton, though for different reasons. They opposed NAFTA and the World Trade Organization (even though some reluctantly voted for the latter); they have cheered Harold Ickes and George Stephanopoulos while deploring Morris's rise. But at the convention the leading economic nationalists bit their tongues and backed the president wholeheartedly. "A lot of people are waiting until November 6 to talk about the things we really want to do," said the top aide to one nationalist congressional leader. "There is a lot of work going on in the wings."

The economic nationalists share the DLCers' vision of a new era of global capitalism, but without the optimistic gloss. To the nationalists, the new capitalism is partly responsible for our baleful wage stagnation, and they assign government a major role in undoing the damage. They see global capitalism as an irregular system in which the power of markets is constantly offset by national trade strategies. They fault the U.S.—and the New Democrats—for a dogmatic free-trade position that leaves the U.S. at the mercy of mercantilist states such as China and Japan.

They also take a dim view of U.S. multinational corporations, which they argue now exercise more influence than ever over domestic economic life. Able to move their factories and research facilities from one country to another, corporations have increased leverage over workers and communities in the U.S. This mobility has driven down wages and boosted workers' insecurity.

Government, the nationalists say, should enforce uniform trading rules and bolster American workers. "We have let working Americans drift into greater competition without greater tools to meet that competition," Gephardt said to the Economic Strategy Institute last February. "We have asked them to play with the deck

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stacked against them, in a global economy without basic rules and standards, when we should have been insisting that fair trade is the only free trade." Gephardt advocated a "golden rule" of trade—doing unto countries as they do unto us—and the inclusion of labor and environmental standards in international pacts.

This faction also wants to curb the multinationals' power. They suggest eliminating current tax incentives for American corporations to produce their goods overseas. In addition, Gephardt, New Mexico Senator Jeff Bingaman and others propose other incentives for corporations to invest their profits at home and protect their workers against the ravages of the global economy. Last February, a task force Bingaman chaired proposed tax incentives and regulatory relief to corporations that met certain standards, such as contributing a designated percentage of their payroll to pensions and worker training and investing heavily in the U.S. and in R&D.

Finally, the economic nationalists break from the New Democrats in their attitude toward unions. The DLC was born partly out of hostility to the AFL-CIO in Washington, and many of its leaders came from right-to-work states. In "The New Progressive Declaration," the DLC grudgingly mentions unions as a bulwark against the power of industry but insists that "working Americans today need to adapt existing institutions such as unions to the knowledge economy and create new associations that enhance their economic power and promote community self-help." By contrast, the economic nationalists want government to encourage worker organization by ratcheting up the penalties on corporations that illegally block unionization.

If the New Democrats' views echo those of some Gingrich conservatives, the economic nationalists' views resemble those of Ross Perot and Pat Buchanan. Perot's first choice this year for vice president was Democratic Representative Marcy Kaptur of Ohio, a leading economic nationalist in the House. Kaptur, Gephardt and other economic nationalists differ from Perot on entitlements and from Buchanan on social issues, but they are of like mind on international trade and on multinational corporations. Both sets of resemblances—between DLCers and Gingrichites, between economic nationalists and certain independents—suggest the possibility of a major realignment between the parties, akin to the alliance Republican conservatives eventually forged with the Dixiecrats. For the time being, though, the different factions will likely continue to vie for power within their separate parties.

The conflict within the Democratic Party is likely to erupt next year—over entitlement reform and the deficit, over the expansion of NAFTA to Chile and other countries, and over various proposals to punish or reward corporations for their conduct. Both factions also see a battle looming over the presidential nomination in 2000, with the Gore-Gephardt contest looking right now like its most probable incarnation.

Instead of waging combat, however, leaders of these two factions might recognize that they have complementary strengths and weaknesses and would do well to join forces. The DLC offers its emphasis on social responsibility and, more important, political realism; it has thought about new ways the Democrats can accomplish their traditional goals. Granting workers vouchers for retraining makes more sense than running the programs from Washington; rebuilding inner cities requires more than added government cash. The DLC understands that Democrats won't win elections as long as they advocate transferring working people's tax money to people who aren't working.

But the DLC's halcyon view of a decentralized corporate America has little basis in fact and makes for bad politics. The computer industry has become dominated by several giant international firms, and the communications and health care industries are following suit. Voters also know better. Even Clinton has stopped repeating his catchphrase for post-industrial optimism, that change is "our friend rather than our enemy."

The economic nationalists have a more realistic view of the world economy and of multinational corporations. But many of them adhere to outmoded political approaches to domestic problems. They think Americans really want a Canadian-style health insurance system. They think education can be reformed simply by diverting more money to lower-income schools. On virtually every problem they argue that, in the words of the Campaign for America's Future, "economics matters most."

Could the two factions merge, pooling their strengths and overcoming their weaknesses? Possibly. While Gore and Gephardt are political rivals, their own views are more complicated than the factions they are supposed to represent. Gephardt, the first chairman of the DLC, was a neo-liberal, an "Atari Democrat," in the '80s. Though never an innovator on domestic policy, neither is he a die-hard "old Democrat." His trade positions are subtler than his opponents claim. Like Clinton, he initially supported a version of NAFTA that would incorporate tough labor and environmental standards; it was Clinton who abandoned that position under Republican pressure.

Nor is Gore a typical New Democrat. In the 1988 election, after Gephardt's money ran out, Gore co-opted his trade themes. Though Gore loyally went to bat for NAFTA, he's always been closer to Gephardt than to Al From on trade issues. In the Senate he worked with Bingaman on an industrial policy, and as vice president he has courted union leaders. During the convention, Gore, even more than Robert Reich, was the administration's point man with the unions.

Under the leadership of either Gephardt or Gore, the Democrats could head toward a new political synthesis. It would rest on both factions' recognition of a new global capitalist order and a shared commitment to a government role in easing the adaptation. It could restore the Democrats' working- and middle-class base without returning to old-fashioned formulas. Then again, the two men and their factions could choose to duke it out—sending the party hurtling toward a devastating showdown and, perhaps, political Armageddon. •

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THE HARD QUESTIONS

Opportunism knocks

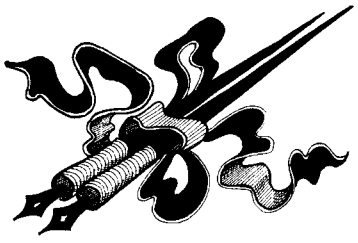
Political opportunism is an odd vice. We commonly abhor it in our friends but welcome it in our opponents. Visiting Israel this past summer, I found the country's left holding its collective breath and hoping that Benjamin Netanyahu is not a man of principle. Let him take stock of the situation, my friends said, consult Israel's security experts and its generals, its economists and businessmen. Then let him give up his commitment to Greater Israel for the sake of greater prosperity, the American alliance, an entrée to European markets, secure relations with Egypt, the lesser evil of Yasir Arafat and so on. Some who voted for him welcome exactly this surrender—voters are often cynical-smart—but many others will feel betrayed if it comes. They will call Bibi an opportunist. I long to hear the word.

When confronted with people whose political principles we find immoral and obnoxious, we suddenly discover the virtue of pragmatism. "Don't you see the electoral opportunity?" I would say to Netanyahu (if he asked me). If you can advance the peace process from the far right, Likud will hold power for years to come—and you will, too. I would trade potential right-wing victories in the future for a little opportunistic decency here and now.

On the other hand, when President Clinton promised to sign the Republican welfare bill, I was among those who felt betrayed. Doesn't the man have any principles? It's probably true that welfare reform was given such a central role in Clinton's 1992 campaign only because it scored so well with the focus groups organized by his staff. Indeed, no line was greeted with greater enthusiasm throughout the months of speechmaking than his pledge "to end welfare as we know it." So opportunism was the starting point. But, once elected, Clinton put Donna Shalala in charge of Health and Human Services, and she brought good people (David Ellwood, Mary Jo Bane) to work on the reform program. Their proposals were certainly principled enough (that's why they got nowhere politically). They recognized that serious reform would cost serious money in the short run, whatever its long-term fiscal benefits. "Workfare" wasn't possible, at least it wasn't morally possible, without jobs, job training, childcare and more.

The bill that Clinton has now signed provides little money for these things, and therefore it isn't a reform of the system so much as an act of hostility against the people the system helped, a punitive campaign against the poor. But the Republicans have triumphed in the politics of naming: this is the available "reform," and Clinton has gone along with it, opportunistically, to seize a piece of the credit.

That, of course, is exactly what I expected him to do. I wasn't at all surprised to be "betrayed." Aren't politicians supposed to be opportunistic—especially in democracies where the imperatives of reelection always loom? It is opportunism that connects them to the political process and forces responsibility upon them. The picture that disillusioned liberals and the Dole campaign alike have drawn in recent months—of an upright president ruling according to his principles, without regard for public opinion, reckless of popular support—is a false picture of how democratic politics works, or should work. We want presidents to be responsive, to take regular soundings of the people's views about the success or failure of administration policies, then to adjust the policies. They should refuse to make the adjustments only if they sense the public will welcome a rousing refusal to kowtow to public opinion. Sure, politicians should sometimes accept defeat for the sake of moral principle. But such moments are rare in the political life of a functioning democracy; responsible politicians avoid the melodrama of self-sacrifice. If they didn't, they wouldn't be politicians.



So my sense of betrayal was in fact an act of moral self-indulgence—a way of blaming the president for doing what presidents do, what they should do. The real failure in the welfare reform story was not Clinton's. It belongs instead to liberals and leftists (like me and my friends) in the country at large, who lacked the will, or the energy, or the capacity, to mobilize opposition to this Congress's fake "reform." Had we done so, we might have given Clinton a different opportunity schedule.

Consider the facts that must have figured in the president's calculations. People on welfare are not politically organized, and they vote in relatively small numbers. In general, men and women living below the poverty line are only half as likely to vote as men and women who earn $35,000 and above. The union movement, whose leaders urged a veto, has been in radical decline for decades now; the percentage of organized workers in the private sector is currently at pre-New Deal levels. The Democratic Party no longer has a strong urban base, with ward and precinct organizations that can "deliver" an election. The gap that separates poor Americans from the rest of the country has been widening, in every sense: the poor are poorer, more segregated geographically, more disconnected from the economy, with fewer organizational links to the middle classes. No one came to Washington, as Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan told a *New York Times* reporter, to lobby against welfare "reform." So what purchase on the mind of the president could the idea of a veto have?

Of course, he had vetoed earlier versions of the welfare bill. But those vetoes were part of the negotiating process. They gave him a stake in the bill. They forced additions and revisions that he can now call his own. The bill is slightly better than it would have been, and this is the president's work. So, perhaps, he can smooth his conscience; opportunists have consciences, too. But presidents don't act conscientiously. They act politically. They make judgments about what will mobilize support and build coalitions. They do what pleases, or what they think will please, the most people. Advocates of real welfare reform need to find some way to make themselves the people who have to be pleased.

Netanyahu will probably prove more faithful to his principles than Clinton. Politicians of the far right (the far left, too) are less likely to be opportunistic because they are less committed to democratic values; they are contemptuous of the people or, at least, of selected portions of the people. They know what patriots and loyal citizens should think and do. They have no interest in compromising with men and women who are "soft" or deluded about the national enemy. The near left, by contrast, wants all politicians, its own included, to respond to the popular will. It is those of us out of power, free of governmental responsibility, who have to challenge that will and try to change it. Waiting for a principled president is bad politics.

MICHAEL WALZER

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Shop Talk

Obviously the one-set play with very few characters is not suitable for filming—except that, like so many obvious wisdoms, it's untrue. Precepts bend to talent. *Stevie* and *The Caretaker* and *My Dinner with André*, all made from small-scale theater works, are valuable films. **American Buffalo** (Samuel Goldwyn) is another.

David Mamet made the screen adaptation of his play and has done only a little physical "opening up": most of the film takes place where the play does, in Don's Resale Shop, a junk shop crammed with all kinds of odds and ends. One of the play's fascinations is that it seems to put that shop under a microscope. A minuscule speck of the world is hugely enlarged, like the eye of a fly in magnifying photography; so, paradoxically, the shop becomes massive in veristic detail at the same time that it becomes an abstraction. In the film the paradox is heightened with a simple device. The streets outside are always empty, whether we glimpse them through the windows or occasionally go out there. Once in a long while, a car drives by. Not one other person is seen, other than a few partially glimpsed faces in a poker game right at the start. Thus this intensely realistic shop is simultaneously anywhere and nowhere.

It's in a dingy part of whatever city it is. Opposite Don's is a vacant movie theater, for rent. Diagonally across the way is the coffee shop that figures in the dialogue, but the doorway is not exactly busy. Sometimes it rains, heavily, and, as heavy rain will do, this increases the sense of enclosure.

Mamet's language in itself underscores the paradox of verism-cum-abstraction. The general texture is naturalistic, nearly stenographic—the broken sentences, the repetitions, the litanies of everyday; then, suddenly, with a word or a phrase, the vernacular lifts into an arch. "This is admirable." "You know, this is real classical money we're talking about." "The shot is yours, no one's disputing that." "The path of some crazed lunatic sees you as an invasion of his personal domain." With a lesser writer, such lines might seem fissures in verism; but Mamet so thoroughly certifies the accuracy of his ear that we feel we are flying past the character's actual powers of expression into the thoughts in him that he isn't always able to express. Like the physical context, the real is lifted into the abstract.

Two men are the center of the piece, Don, who owns the shop, and Teach, of no known occupation except burglaries now and then. They gab and fret and discuss and pass the time until, almost obliquely, a plan for a burglary is broached by Don. There's a third character, a young gofer called Bob, a sort of apprentice to Don, who is also involved in the burglary plan. The title refers to an American buffalo nickel that a customer bought in Don's shop a week or so earlier.

Don suspects, though he's not sure, that the coin is worth more than he got for it and that the customer has other rarities. Don decides to rob the customer's house, and it's around this scheme that the play simmers and boils. The scheme is inchoate—very loose indeed if these are experienced burglars—but the play's emphasis is not on the burglary itself, it's on the dialogue around it, the verbal volleyball that the two principals keep playing. In Beckett's *Endgame* Clov asks, "What is there to keep me here?" Hamm replies, "The dialogue." Beckett's pair are inside an empty sphere scraping its top; Mamet's pair are also inside, scraping the bottom. Both pairs live and breathe through interchange.

American Buffalo is full of opportunities for the eager symbolic interpreter. The junk shop as the detritus of an errant, wasteful society; Teach (which is only his nickname) as an instructor who can't instruct; and (bingo!) the quest for the coin whose true value isn't known, plus the fumbling of that quest—all this is fodder for symbolists. For me, however, the play is a species of incantation, profane and desperate, by vacuous men trying to create through their "dialogue" some sense of being, some environment for that being.

The producer of this film was Gregory Mosher, long experienced in the theater, who directed the world premiere of *American Buffalo* in Chicago in 1975. The director was Michael Corrente, who has written and directed one previous film, *Federal Hill*, unseen by me. Corrente was trained for the theater and has worked there, including a production of *American Buffalo*. Presumably aided by Mosher and certainly aided by the editor, Kate Sanford, he keeps the film moving without jostling it. Corrente never seems worried about the

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Celestial Clockwork. *Parisian patisserie. A fast, sexy farce about a young soprano trying to make it in opera. Full of fizz and fun. (Reviewed 9/2/96)* **Manny & Lo.** *Two sisters, 11 and 17, living on the road and loving it. Delicate comedy about the possibilities of absolute freedom. (8/19/96)* **A Time to Kill.** *A Mississippi black man is tried for killing his daughter's rapists. The gravity of the theme is compromised, but the acting is superb and the directing crackles. (9/2/96)* **Walking and Talking.** *Young New York women handling and fumbling life, love, sex. Familiar stuff, but the dialogue is brisk, and there's some neat small-scale acting. (8/19/96)*—**SK**

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one-room venue, and his freedom is even clearer in those few scenes where we go outside—they never seem frantic attempts to escape four walls. The film just takes place, naturally and energetically, where it takes place.

About the performances themselves, some question. Dustin Hoffman is Teach, long-haired and scruffy, loping around like a man who has nowhere to go and is, from moment to moment, inventing a dynamic for his life. Hoffman was implicitly up against tough competition in this part. Some of us have seen Robert Duvall and Al Pacino as Teach, and each was, in his own temper, superb. Hoffman, ultimately, is not. He has all the technique, the vigor of address, the experienced actor's ravening of actor's chances, but sometimes these attributes become apparent. A gesture is too clearly enjoyed, an intonation slips upward from this mucky world; and we become aware of Hoffman, the star, slumming. Remembering his Ratso Rizzo in *Midnight Cowboy* twenty-seven years ago, in some measure an antecedent of Teach, I hoped to see Ratso much more full and complex. But in those twenty-seven years Hoffman has become so stellar that he can't keep every wisp of his success out of this performance.

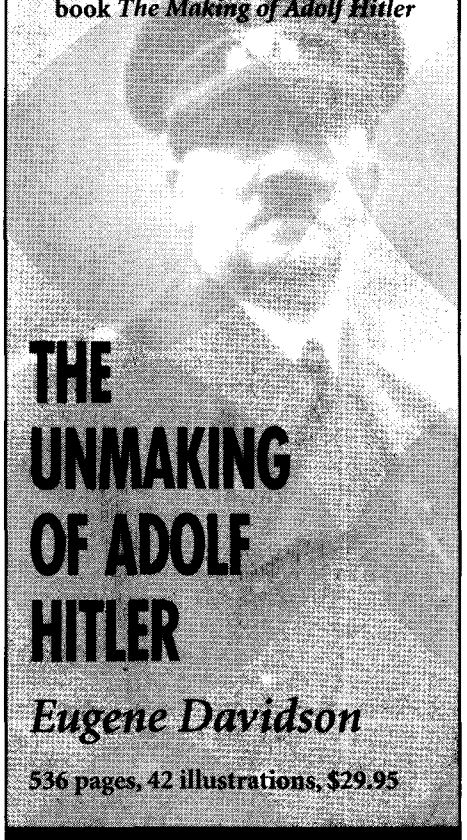
Don is played by Dennis Franz, known for his running role in "NYPD Blue." Here his performance exemplifies the freeze that TV acting can inflict. I've seen that TV show a few times and have seen how Franz presents his bulky presence, his taciturnity, his knowingness week after week in episodes that are in part tailored to keep him turning out the Franz product. He keeps doing it here. Franz certainly has some substance but only to the degree that his predetermined persona allows. He renders the same brusque authority, and, as on TV, his expression scarcely alters throughout the picture. "This is what you bought," he seems to say, "and this is what you'll get."

Bob is done by a teenage black actor, Sean Nelson. He is completely competent, but Nelson adds another element to the mix. Bob has usually been played by someone in his early 20s. The use of Nelson in the part puts Don and Teach in the position of contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

Two further notes. When, toward the end, Teach trashes the shop, it's done much more violently than I've ever seen. This takes Don's passivity past the credible. And Thomas Newman's music is incomprehensibly harsh at the start and finish.

At any rate, *American Buffalo* is now available on film, in a lucid version. Whatever that version's flaws, Mamet's incantation works again. •

From the author of the best-selling book *The Making of Adolf Hitler*



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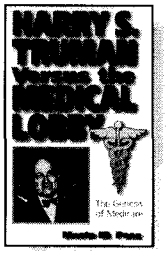

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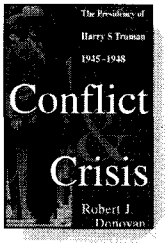

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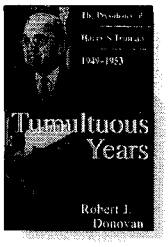

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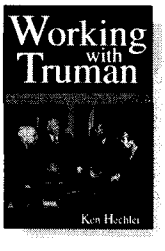

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Robert Brustein on Theater

The Ride Down Mount Rushmore

Arthur Miller's **The Ride Down Mount Morgan** was first produced in London a few years ago. It enjoyed a somewhat mixed reception, despite the playwright's unassailable reputation among the English. The same play received its belated American premiere recently at the Williamstown (Massachusetts) Theater Festival in a new production directed by Scott Elliott. It was performed for only two weeks under summer stock conditions. It deserves further rehearsal and a longer life.

The Ride Down Mount Morgan is very loosely structured for a Miller work. Even more unusual, it is very engaging. I'm not surprised that this octogenarian author could have dreamed up such subject matter. I am agreeably surprised to find him writing about it with such a singular lack of earnestness. Considering the dignity and solemnity of his public persona, Miller has often seemed to be posing for a place on Mount Rushmore. The title of his new play may be unintentionally symbolic. It is the work of a much more lively, supple and mischievous man.

In the past, it is true, these craggy Miller features were occasionally capable of relaxing into a sly, impish smile. What was needed to break the stoneworks was an appropriate character and the right occasion (in *The Price*, Miller found it in the character of Solomon, the Jewish furniture dealer, the occasion being his shrewd wheeling and dealing). In *The Ride Down Mount Morgan*, the playwright has again found an opportunity for exercising his comic muscles, though in a most unlikely arena.

The subject of the work is bigamy, and the central character is a sensualist. Many of Miller's previous characters (Willy Loman and John Proctor) have been guilty of philandering. Yet for once Miller doesn't treat the issue of sexual infidelity with his predictable self-flagellating moralism. Consider the plot. During a difficult winter in the 1980s, Lyman Feld has been badly injured driving in a blizzard down a treacherous mountain in upper New York. Most of the action takes place in his hospital room, where, among his bedside visitors are his Gentile New York wife, Theodora, accompanied by their grown-up daughter—and his Jewish wife from Elmira, Leah, who has borne him a son. Thanks to geography, neither wife knows he has a relationship with the other. The first meeting of these two women at the foot of his bed provides the crisis of the play.

That crisis has a potential for stiff theatrics. But the fact that both wives show up in identical mink coats suggests that Miller is mining the situation for something other than melodrama. Moreover, Lyman's delusionary condition—the result of his head injuries—allows for a more fantastical style than one usually finds in Miller's essentially social-realistic drama. It also permits some visits by a long-dead character (reminiscent of Uncle Ben in *Death of a Salesman*)—namely his cranky immigrant father, who badgers him over his womanizing.

Moving between reality and dream, Lyman searches through his past for meaning like a derelict foraging in trash cans. He loves and needs both wives, though he loses them both. "A man can be faithful to himself or other people," he muses, "but not to both—the first law of life is betrayal." Starting his career as a poet and short story writer (once praised by James Baldwin), Lyman has ended up in his 50s as an insurance salesman. His sense of failed purpose and his pain over aging lead him to seek emotional fulfillment in an affair with Leah, his upstate insurance partner. When the affair turns serious, he lies about having divorced his first wife and marries the second.

Without absolving Lyman of spiritual emptiness ("He's an endless string attached to nothing," remarks his lawyer-friend Tom), Miller digs beneath the moral imperatives of the situation to examine deeper motives. If Lyman resembles the hero of *The Captain's Paradise*, shuttling blithely between two domestic households, he also reminds us of the anguished hero of Graham Greene's *The Heart of The Matter*—not because he suffers from a sense of sin (his conscience is virtually free of guilt), but because of his genuine concern for the well-being of both women. "I just couldn't bear to destroy your happiness," he says to one of them. "I am a bad man who loves you all," he tells them both. Later he affirms that he cannot "stand still for death," though it is always sitting on his shoulder. "Life, life," he moans, "fuck death and dying."

The romantic escapades of this aging Lothario are his defense against old age and oblivion. They are also his way of defying boredom. Both wives believe in fidelity, largely because it strengthens the social system. Theodora reflects: "The stronger the family, the weaker the police, and that is why monogamy is a high art." But Theodora's banal domesticity, not to mention her "incredibly Protestant cooking," have made Lyman hunger for more passionate alternatives. He claims he rode down Mount Morgan in order to persuade Leah how much he needed her and also to reinvigorate his life. But this foolhardy ride may have been an unconscious effort to punish himself through suicide. By the end of the play, he has lost everybody he loves. His nurse, a black woman, sits by his side and gives the lonely man a quick kiss on the forehead. Why? "No reason."

Scott Elliott's production evoked some finely tuned performances. But in Williamstown they seem modulated more for the camera than for the stage. Though intimate and relaxed, the actors were not always audible, as if they had been asked to sacrifice theatricality for reality. In the theater, the balance between projection and truth is usually the hardest to achieve. It was not always achieved in Williamstown. Still, F. Murray Abraham seemed to be having a really fine time as Lyman, and his infectious warmth and high spirits communicated well to the audience. Michael Learned's Theo alternated between understanding and outrage, occasionally breaking into a wonderfully goofy hysteria. Patricia Clarkson as Leah etched an attractive portrait of a good-natured forgiving woman slowly turning sour. Derek McLane's setting was an abstract space, framed by walls fallen out of the perpendicular and backed by a huge impressionistic mountain, which proved both serviceable and haunting. More work has to be done, both by playwright and director, on heightening the contrast between the real and fantasy life of the play. When it's ready for prime time, *The Ride Down Mount Morgan* promises to be an exhilarating journey, as well as an exciting debut for its youthful author.

The centerpiece of John Rockwell's enterprising first season as producer of the Lincoln Center Festival was the Robert Wilson production of the Gertrude Stein/ Virgil Thompson **Four Saints in Three Acts** (New York State Theater), the first professional staging of the opera in sixty years. Summer programs at this cultural complex have traditionally been considerably more adventurous than its winter seasons, and the summer of 1996 was no exception. Yet, for all the visual beauties of this Houston Grand Opera production, it contained fewer surprises than we have

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come to expect from Wilson.

Clearly, Robert Wilson has found a kindred spirit in Gertrude Stein, as he last proved in 1992 with his Hebbel-Theatre production of *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights*. The way in which Stein deconstructs language resembles Wilson's early experimentation with the language of deaf and autistic children, and her modernist imagery obviously stimulates Wilson's visual imagination. "I felt a creative dialogue with her," writes Wilson in his program note, "especially with her notion of seeing a play as a landscape." Still, some creative dialogues can be too agreeable, just as some artistic marriages can be too comfortable. If Wilson's *Four Saints in Three Acts* seems like a minor work, it may be because this prolific artist was not sufficiently challenged by his material to move into territory not yet explored.

As usual, Wilson is painting in motion. The setting, costumes, props and lighting (all his creations) are splendid. Liberated from consecutive plot—and what he calls "ping-pong dialogue"—Wilson can focus his imagination on stage pictures. And at the same time that he fills the void with exquisite imagery—crescent moons, two-dimensional sheep, disembodied hands, transparent eggs, six white giraffes—he arranges the large cast of singers into continually changing groupings that create a sense of strangely amorphous humanity.

The title of the opera is essentially its primary subject. But even the title is whimsical. There are not four saints on stage but twenty. There are not three acts but four. "Four saints are never three," chants the unisex Chorus, "three saints are never four." Stein makes continuous references to the number of acts and scenes in the opera ("How many acts are there in it? Four acts") and continually announces the place we have reached ("Third act, which is a fact"), as if amusing herself with the paraphernalia of play structure. And she occasionally throws us a humorous bone with one of her now familiar nonsense rhymes ("Pigeons on the grass alas"), along with a number of pointless puns ("As loud as that and as allowed as that"). At times, her playful way with words evokes the kind of portmanteau language Joyce invented in *Finnegans Wake*. Usually, it just seems precious, a tiresome form of repetitive absurdity.

Aside from Wilson's stage magic, it is Virgil Thompson's score, elegantly conducted by Dennis Russell Davies with the New York City Opera Orchestra, that rescues the evening from monotony. It is not great music, but at least its ironies are coherent, and its control of Americana evokes a kind of lyrical nostalgia. Thompson combines echoes of Samuel Barber, pastoral airs, quotations from patriotic hymns like "America" and familiar movie music, suggestive of covered wagons breaking the West. The rousing Houston Grand Opera Chorus and the gifted cast of soloists are in fine voice, especially the grinning Compère of Wilbur Pauley, with his half-fur-covered tuxedo, slicked-down black hair and slithering gait, and the St. Ignatius of baritone Sanford Sylvan, who maintains his quiet dignity regardless of what nonsense he is required to sing (or wear). I'm glad I saw Wilson's *Four Saints in Three Acts*. There will never be a more definitive version of this opera. Now that he's gotten that out of his system, I trust Wilson will go on to more challenging projects. •

The Young Republic

BY DAVID BROMWICH

The Sibling Society by Robert Bly

(Addison-Wesley, 319 pp., $25)

A child knows the world of the living. A grown-up knows something of those who are dead, and can think of those who are still to be born. So a society that has a past and looks to a future had better be a society with a fair ratio of grown-ups—a disheartening announcement in America today. Our passage from childhood has grown murky, and ten minutes with a TV or the Internet will show a country densely populated by childlike adults, people who would like to share everything and decide nothing.

To assist them and to increase their numbers, there has arisen a ghostly regime of mediators, prophets of arrested development who hold an undeclared interest in keeping the children just as

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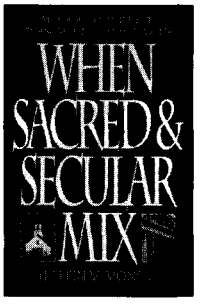

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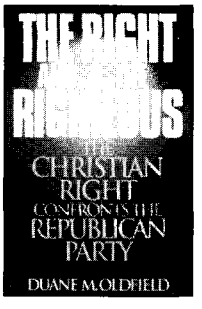

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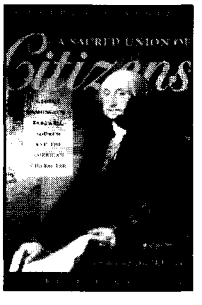

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they are. The entertainment-information complex has yielded symptoms hardly measurable in economic terms, and it is these that concern Robert Bly: above all, a loss of respect for the old, so that the very idea of elders has come to seem a quaintness. We are all one generation now, or getting close to it. Nobody knows how to stop the process, even though nobody much likes the generational tone: laid back, wised up, serviceable.

The Sibling Society is loosely written, in places hardly written at all, and if the author were capable of consecutive argument he would make a better show of it. Its texture is a Jung-and-Campbell soufflé of archetypes, its sole narrative device an ad hoc exegesis of fairy tales, from *Jack and the Beanstalk* to the story about the snake that ate its first twelve brides and was tamed by the thirteenth, a resourceful woman who strips off one of his skins for every wedding shirt she removes, scrubs him with lye and a wire brush and finds him changed to a man. Bly trots out the archetype-analysis side by side with his unorganized free reflections, and the only rule seems to be that anything may be said anywhere.

Yet Bly has lived in our society and watched it to some effect, and his title deserves to catch on. We lacked a name for what is happening when we are first-named by a sales clerk, a real-estate agent, an investment broker, or the doctor offering a gloomy prognosis, and for all its slackness of structure the book has a genuine firmness of purpose. We must work hard, it says, to restore the dignity of such lost categories as mentor, apprentice, leader and stranger—the last most of all, since it denotes the unfamiliar person to whom politeness, not intimacy, is owed.

Books of social criticism by Christopher Lasch, William Greider, Neil Postman and many others supply the background picture of American mores that Bly takes for granted, but his motive for writing seems to have come from a personal recognition:

> I was startled one day walking on Madison near Eighty-fifth Street, when I saw a poster that asked this question:
>
> *What is 24 stories tall, carries the most sophisticated armament on earth, and is run by a crew of 21 year olds?*
>
> The answer was "an aircraft carrier," the poster being an advertisement for a program on the Discovery channel. The "most sophisticated armament on earth" means the ability to devastate entire countries—and this is to be run by a crew of twenty-one year olds? There is a lie involved, spoken to flatter young men and women: a lie that resides in the ambiguity of the word "run." The ad people want to have twenty-one year olds running the carrier; and the twenty-one year olds believe they can and should run it. We understand that they don't "run" a carrier, but why is this word made inexact? The confusion of who should run the carrier is a confusion deep in the sibling society. Freshman members of Congress believe they can and should run the government.

Advertising has become the universal solvent of education, and "those devoted to the bottom line," Bly suspects, "have effectively interposed themselves between the father and the family. Part of the effort has been to get at the children more easily. The more the parents' dignity and strength are damaged, the more open the children are to persuasion." Our long adolescence can now extend well into our 40s and 50s, and it routinely begins for children at the age of 9 or 10.

In every earlier generation, a rebellious child, turning against the rules of parents, could see beyond the hottest resentment a solid grown-up world whose behavior gave a reason for the opaqueness of the barrier. It was a different world: unattractive for the most part, but different. Bank clerks, teachers, ballplayers, shopkeepers, even journalists acted and looked like "men and women who knew how to have fun, but they had one foot in Necessity," as Bly reflects when comparing photographs of a baseball crowd in the '20s with the look of Americans on the streets of Europe today.

Square America, however, has died. We will never know who or what killed it, but one casualty was an ethic of reticence, the sense that a large part of life is not meant to be lived in reactions or even words. Reticence and decorum are close neighbors. When I was 7, the father of a friend, giving a lesson in manners, told me coolly to address him as "Mr." or "Sir" and never as just "you." It was an unpleasant moment and I thought him an unpleasant man, but the lesson was learned; and on the whole it probably gave childhood a freer feeling to have the assurance that grown-ups were different from one's friends.

A boy growing up today gets much more confusing signals. A lot of the authorities are trying to be cool, like him, and clever in a way not markedly different from his: they do not slow down and speak from a distance. Classwork in grade school has become largely an affair of peer education, the class divided into groups to "pool their resources," that is, to share their opinions and to dig up random facts before being called together to present an audiovisual product. Methods such as those of the Whittle corporation, whose Channel One broadcasts curricular films mixed in with commercials, were unthinkable a generation ago and would have been discountenanced. Our licensed amusers are preparing appetites to which the concept of the infomercial is in no way suspect.

It is perceptive of Bly to have noticed that this is a war of bad parents and nonparents against the right of children to grow up as thinking beings. He blames the academic left, among others, for lowering the tone of education, and calls its adepts "colonial administrators"—scions of a privileged class, who teach the undesirability of inheriting anything and so cheat their constituency of the powers of self-invention. This last point is not false, but it is not new and does not rise above the level of grousing annoyance. The word "deconstruction" appears in these pages as an approximate synonym for poison gas.

Bly's acquaintance with left-wing opinion lapsed after his service in the anti-war protests of the 1960s, and was only renewed with mutual shock at the scandalized reception of *Iron John*, his masculine self-help tract. Traces of the tribal-mythic homily of that book linger in this one: "We need to institute something like the Artemis bear-clan to protect young girls from the pressure of Junk culture or siblingism, and to institute as well rituals to honor their associations with the divine world." Not just the colonial administrators but also some of the natives may wonder what to make of that. But therapeutic proposals are a minor element in *The Sibling Society*, and it cannot be called anti-feminist since, according to Bly, every boy is in a worse fix than every girl from the moment "the nipple is inserted in his mouth; later he will have trouble with anything inserted." I cannot guess the meaning of such a passage. It seems put in to show new readers where the author was coming from, a matter of small interest compared to the things he is pointing to.

Bly writes mostly from the stance of a perplexed citizen, and once his leading observation has lodged itself in your mind, the evidence to confirm it is everywhere. Consider a symptom we never really bother to analyze—the enormous numbers of Americans who rage against taxes. The complaint is as old as the country, but the rage is not, and it ought to be unsettling. It is not that taxes are too high, or that people wish at least their property or their whiskey could be spared. Rather, it seems to many a transparent offense that there should be taxes at all.

Politicians, who cannot escape knowing better, only in rare instances have re-

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frained from wheedling with this delusive style of resentment. They go along with the grievances because they want to be good siblings. In the years of the cold war, when money saved out of taxes might have helped to buy a bomb shelter and a shotgun to keep out the neighbors, nobody grudged the payments to support decently functioning police and fire departments, public schools and public parks. It would have been thought a low boast, the sign of a shady character, to be heard congratulating yourself about how cleverly you cheated the government. That kind of talk was for mob lawyers. Today the fact that a rule or a request or a protocol emanates from established authority is enough to warrant any brutality of abuse in the fight against it.

Violent resisters may be few, but they have many apologists. We make a poor show opposing the distrust by which citizens are recruited from believing that they have duties to society to believing that they have none. The prevalent view of authority in the middle classes is a generalized irony—a graceful attitude struck for its own sake—and one of the best speculative passages in Bly's book tells how this posture acquired its appeal:

> Parents of my generation taught our children the codes of responsibility, restraint, and renunciation, but also we taught them how to evade the codes. Stepping through the codes was a secret game among parents in the 1970s, a little payback for being a parent. That would be all right—at least humanly normal—if the code were strong. But widely varying codes from a dozen attractive cultures flood our receptors. If we want to evade a certain element in our code, the renunciation of selfishness or thievery, for example, we can always find another code—the codes by which the Hindu gods live, for example—in which the forbidden is allowed. Some of us spend our whole lives looking, successfully, for holes in the codes. When our parents teach us how to do that at the dinner table, we find those lessons very appealing. We could say that flatness lies in saying yes to everything.

And in saying no to nothing. For people in authority today, especially people in their 30s and 40s, have an extraordinarily hard time saying no. They have a hard and endless time with cases that present a genuine test—turning down an honest plea or disappointing a party with a quasi-official entitlement for pleading. Negotiation postpones the final no and changes its meaning, and when the authorities do say it at last, they often show a visible reluctance with a bending of the head, knees or voice. The refusal is of the serial kind that lays the ground for a future request.

Freud thought that every group demands of its masters "strength, or even violence. It wants to be ruled and oppressed and to fear its master." That was in a paternal society. Today the masters act in the self-fulfilling belief that the group wants to be their friend. Compare the Steichen portrait of J.P. Morgan with the jacket photo on Bill Gates's corporate memoir: there a murderous father, perfect in his powers of repression; here a brother among brothers, superior only in his billions.

Our masters dominate now by the creation of spectacles, electronically proliferated. "Some sort of trance," writes Bly, "takes over if enough people are watching an event simultaneously," and the trance becomes harder to break when we have the mysterious knowledge that a given event is being watched by others just like ourselves. An elder in this setting is rather like a judge, and with none on the scene, the siblings are free to astonish each other. The judges in actual courtrooms today, if Lance Ito and Harold Baer are not anomalies, have a hard time carrying themselves like judges even in conditions of maximum exposure. Jurors in famous trials of the past two years have begun to share every detail of their deliberations: the task of private conscience seems a pointless renunciation, or an instruction they did not understand. Yet

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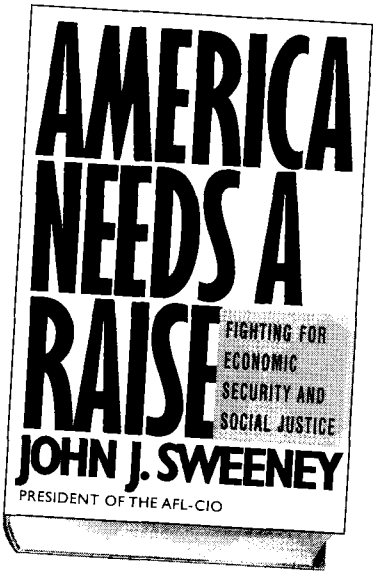

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so fixed are American reflexes in these matters that opinion-makers can imagine the remedy lies in still more spectacle. It would serve the cause of uniform justice, *The New York Times* lately suggested, to televise all criminal trials.

The want of humility in "our talking America," as Emerson called it, has long been part of our eagerness for distinction. Citizens in a democracy are always looking for new grounds for approval. Practically, this means finding reasons connected with merit, or with social conformity, or both. No earlier observer could have guessed how suddenly this would change to a quest for exemption from the social order—a contractual exclusion which itself becomes a source of distinction shared with others. Pausing to note the way impeccable political time-servers affect to speak from the margins, Bly brings together his cultural and educational themes in an aphorism: "If your arguments have been rejected by four or more institutions, they do not need any evidence at all to be accepted." I recently heard a high-school teacher attending a talk on Abraham Lincoln inform the speaker that Lincoln was a slave-owner. The truth was in some documents that had never been translated.

The Reagan years were a turning point. You will not find quite these words in *The Sibling Society*, but Bly says as much in other words, and his remarks on the subject are just wrong enough to be irritating. Reagan was "a poor father by all accounts," while leaving the impression of a good and fatherly person, but this need not be hypocrisy, nor does it follow that he was "utterly unable to stand for any important 'traditional' values." Stand for them is exactly what he did, as a mascot stands for a team. He felt the force of those values as a thing of the past, which gave a reflected glory to Americans in the present, and required in observance neither acts nor habits of self-sacrifice. "He managed to represent limitless acquisition, disguised as family," says Bly, but fondness for money was surely a recessive note in the Reagan personality, and that was part of his appeal. Familial piety was more important, and if he summoned only the echoes of paternal dignity, echoes can often succeed by their shallowness: the depth is supplied by our memory of the original.

Reagan's was a piety without a burden, a loyalty that floated free of specific duties, and we have only begun to see how much his illusions will cost. Yet Bly succumbs to an ordinary failure of observation when he says that this president showed an "envy of the rich." Reagan never conveyed a particle of that sentiment, being always utterly trustful of the rich and successful, an old man who shone with the confidence that "a boy like me," as he called himself at a late press conference, would have a house built for him and the future taken care of by the benevolent order that attends to such things. He conveyed gratitude extremely well—something that does not go with envy.

We could wish for a gratitude more discriminating of its patrons and less willing to bankrupt the future at their pleasure. That kind of moral and personal strength has few public exemplars today, and a more inquisitive mind than Bly's might ask why this is so. Gianni Vattimo in *The Transparent Society* described philosophically many of the same phenomena as *The Sibling Society*, but he did his best to feel encouraged: the leveling of manners is democratic; the reluctance to blame or praise heroically, or to decide hard cases, may be a benign effect of tolerance; and with the dismantling of the Enlightenment ideas of reason, judgment and historical continuity citizens are arriving by default at the conclusion postmodern theory has reached by sophistication. The uneasy signs in our time of "disorientation" and "weak thinking"—words that Vattimo uses in a favorable sense—are therefore healthy and may foster less violence than their enlightened precursors. Once we have given up the idea of human nature, and realized that we are infinitely malleable, why not suppose our adjustment time will grow shorter and shorter?

A surprising number of intellectuals are comforted by some such view of contemporary life. Faith in progress was always strong in America, and it has never flourished more wildly than now, but progress for us means almost exclusively technological improvement: traveling faster, talking faster, making money faster. Capitalism lives on this faith as credulously as Marxism. If a piece of improvement can be executed all across the society, we ought to do it in a clean sweep, for the good that we lose is calculable, the good that we gain incalculable. But all the new tools a people master cannot assure their generous use. Technology travels a different road from political stability, moral well-being or aesthetic achievement, and it is for us to say whether a decent society is compatible with what the master siblings want to call progress. Anyway, the choice of manners is separate from the choice of materials. Bly's intuitions about the decomposition of authority may be confirmed or qualified by empirical observers, but in questions like this it is not only empirical answers that one wants. His call to "face the children," half formed as it is and half-unhinged, is also an earnest warning to count the casualties, the ones who will never grow up.

DAVID BROMWICH teaches English at Yale and is the author of *Politics by Other Means: Higher Education & Group Thinking* (Yale University Press).

The End of the Affair

BY ANNE HOLLANDER

The Love Affair as a Work of Art by Dan Hofstadter

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 314 pp., $24)

Dan Hofstadter's title is somewhat misleading. The work of art that he treats is entirely literary and entirely French and was only created somewhere between 1780 and 1920. He means to show how the conduct of a love affair in that time and place could resemble the creation of a work of literature, could generate works of literature, could be based on other love affairs found in works of literature, could always best flourish inside the nourishing matrix of literary language, certainly among literary people. Love itself is very much beside his point.

Literary language, the agent of passion during Hofstadter's period, was put to intensive use in personal letters and private journals, many of which relied on—or reacted against—the tone and the vocabulary and the emotional assumptions found in previously published examples by earlier French writers, as if to verify the authenticity of the writer's own passionate experience, which was also destined to reach the public eventually in literary form. It all tended to confirm the old saying that if nobody ever learned to read, few would ever have been in love. It also confirms the enduring idea, now sustained in our televidiotic world, that love craves an audience.

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But the natural repositories of love's language in France were (and no doubt still are) autobiographical novels. Most of these were cruel tales based on a writer's own love affair, fantasized personal histories that might also reflect the language of other narratives and other writers' personal letters and journals besides the author's own. The mixture could be even further enriched, since not all the writers contributing to the amorous French literary river were the two actors in an affair at all. All their friends, rivals, relatives, accomplices, observers and, later, readers were attentive literary people eager to produce expressive commentary or even different versions and visions of other people's passion, all in the larger service of written language.

Hofstadter finds this state of affairs exclusively French, and most acutely the case during the period he has chosen. And the French intimacy between sexual feeling and literature does find apt illustration in a string of frivolous late eighteenth-century French paintings and engravings titled *La Lecture*, or *Reading*. These show a solitary girl reading. She holds a book in one hand and uses the other hand to caress herself under her skirt. Various lightweight French artists seem to have done one of these images; it was apparently a standard theme. Girls who read, we are instructed, are nicely ripened for seduction, no doubt especially by men who also read and can deploy persuasive amorous language from books.

Hofstadter appears to be telling us that in the conduct of a literary love affair—an undertaking aimed not at direct emotional resolution but at constant transmutation into language—all behavior was not founded, say, on the desire for future seduction or happiness or children, but on the desire to have the memory of it, for the sake of its own literary reconstruction. The worst agonies of jealousy and frustration might arise merely from an awareness of the beloved's memory, of her private mental narrative of a past love, and not from present acts, circumstances and feelings. Or his, of course. Alfred de Musset, in his beautiful poem "Souvenir," says: "*Un souvenir heureux est peut-etre sur terre\ plus vrai que le bonheur.*" On earth a happy memory is perhaps more real than happiness; and of course he implies that it's realer still in a perfect poem, though he doesn't come out and say so.

So the love-affair-as-work-of-art that Hofstadter invokes is never a piece of work created out of the living material at hand. He is a writer, not a historian, and this book is about writing, not about love. He is interested in the experience of love as memory translated into language, because it leads to the secret of any truthful writing about life. It turns out (surprise!) that memory, just like love, won't really work without fantasy and imagination. Art and truth have to keep merging in the creative management of memory, in order to produce the authentic recapture of the past, which is its recapture in writing, where it counts, and not in a prosaic court of law, for example, where fact and fantasy must try to rend themselves apart for society's sake.

Hofstadter ends his book with Proust, considering him at once a culminating figure in a long tradition and a prophet of the modern love stretching beyond him, toward us and our more cinematic, unlettered passions. The cast of characters in this quirky volume is idiosyncratic, not inclusive. There is no Balzac and Mme. Hanska, no Flaubert and Louise Colet, no Stendhal whatsoever, no Mérimée and no Maupassant: no big literary lovers from the middle of the nineteenth century. Instead, bridging a large temporal gap between ripe Romanticism in the first third of the century and emergent Modernity at its far end, there is a carefully interlocking chain of writer-lovers and their writer-friends and writer-enemies, a looping chain of language that binds the end of the century back to

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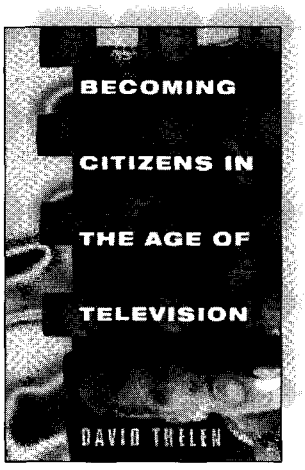

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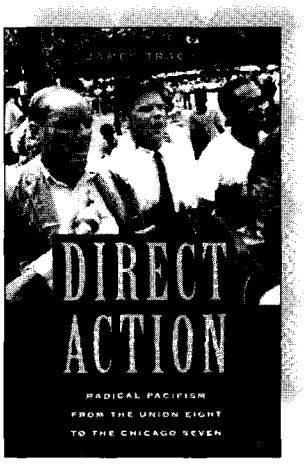

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before it began and on into our own.

Hofstadter starts with Benjamin Constant, born in 1767, and his different lady-loves, including Mme. De Staël (1766-1817) and Mme. Récamier (1777-1849). Then he moves on to the latter's lover, Chateaubriand (1768-1848), and then easily onward to the famous liaison between Alfred de Musset (1810-1857) and George Sand (1804-1876), who lived long enough so that Proust (1871-1922) was a 5-year-old when she died, already learning to remember, who in turn grew up with a deep admiration for Anatole France (1844-1924), whose great literary love affair was with Mme. Caillavet, the last of the true literary salonnières and one model for Mme. Verdurin, at whose house the young Proust finally met France, and whose daughter-in-law was one model for Gilberte.

All of these figures have some connection with the important critic Sainte-Beuve (1804-1869)—who inhabits the center of the nineteenth century, and all corners of this book—and with each other, sometimes through him. By the century's last years, Anatole France and Proust had long since absorbed the works of Madame de Staël, Chateaubriand and Constant, had seen how Sand and Musset turned their private stress into published books, and had deeply considered Sainte-Beuve's reflections on all of them, and on the relations between a writer's work and life.

Their fin-de-siècle lives and writings were marked by this emotional and literary inheritance, still the historic birthright of all French writers who devote themselves to the métier with full consciousness of its continuing influence over modern literary efforts, even over modern memory and feeling. The implication still is that if highly literate French people fall in love, they automatically take up residence in the Palace of Letters, where perfect behavior should include making a contribution before leaving, adding a brick or a finial of their own to the great national structure, in one of the recognized national styles.

Anatole France and Proust, like Sand and Chateaubriand, had read the French literature of earlier centuries, where the founding French strategies for dealing with love and language had been set up in the Renaissance, based on antique sources modern French writers also knew. Sainte-Beuve himself had written critical works aimed at uniting these old French traditions with new Romantic ones, precisely to help forge a patrimony of purely French literary art dealing with passions and sensibilities. It all formed a creative force obviously stronger than love itself, and one that would make of love an eternally loyal French subject.

Sainte-Beuve's personal life had strong links with great writers, though his own autobiographical novel, temptingly called *Volupté*, was an artistic failure. Balzac, who disliked the critic very much, promptly rewrote Sainte-Beuve's bad novel very brilliantly as *Le Lys dans la Vallée*, as if to prove that a writer's autobiography more properly belonged to a better writer; and anyway all's fair in art. It was Sainte-Beuve who introduced Sand to Musset, and sniffed all around their notorious affair, and wrote about it and about their writings about it. He even had an affair with the wife of Victor Hugo, more directly exposing himself to the contagion of genius, although that, too, was a failure.

But Sainte-Beuve had also successfully written at length about the literary attachments and achievements of the generation before his, including a famous obituary of Mme. Récamier, the great beauty of her day, the adored of Constant, the lover of Chateaubriand and the staunch friend of Madame de Staël. He wrote about Chateaubriand's famously fanciful memoirs; about Constant's fierce novel *Adolphe*, with its desperate illumination of his affair with Madame de Staël (which Balzac, incidentally, also stole and rewrote as *La muse du département*). But *Adolphe* records only one of the several stormy liaisons written up in Constant's journals and memoirs and recorded in letters, all of which Sainte-Beuve also wrote about.

Sainte-Beuve, indeed, is the hero-villain of this book, the stand-in for the author with his confessed inquisitive pleasure in intimacy with literary passion. Sainte-Beuve had proved that such an intimacy can be achieved through literary effort itself; and we can see in these very pages how the devoted voyeur may successfully write himself into the boudoirs and the bedrooms of other writers, present or past, if equipped with sufficient zeal and application, some humility and some wit.

Hofstadter begins in a self-deprecating way, calling his enterprise "a game for a day," ostentatiously declining the higher seriousness of scholarly inquiry or deep critical analysis. He's after the higher gossip, the kind that takes a lot of fantasy and acknowledges no responsibilities. He approaches his writers' secrets in a casual, familiar style, boldly presuming on their acquaintance for our benefit, just like Sainte-Beuve. He wants to avoid the note of reverence at all costs, so he speculates in modern colloquial language about his people's feelings, actions, looks and motives as if they were all his friends, or friends of his friends.

He takes one sort of fictional route, placing himself among centuries-ago characters as an immediate and invisible observer, and then commenting to us fellow moderns on what he finds them doing. It works very well as a device for bringing the past to life, or us to life inside it; but Hofstadter's determinedly informal style can be disconcerting, as when he refers to someone having "pitched woo" to someone at an earlier time, or to a certain man as a "huntin'-and-fishin' type." Where are we, and where is he, at such moments? Neither in nineteenth-century France nor in late twentieth-century America.

George Sand is made central in the book as a prophetic woman, the first of the modern era to render female sexual passion in good literary language and to claim equality with men in this arena. It is true enough that the great French literary tradition about love tended to be about the masculine analysis of masculine feeling in the face of feminine beauty, sexuality, malice, purity, goodness, madness, dependency, perversity, whatever you like. Even brilliant and intelligent Germaine de Staël, inflamed by ideas, had very little to say about her half of the drastic affair between her and Constant. (In it she seems to have acted instinctively, providing the charm, caprice, dependency and so forth, while he did all the analyzing, brooding and writing.) Her writings are all about literature, politics and history, while her two novels about women are about freedom, art and individuality, not about love, and certainly not about this affair.

The original idea about literary love was that the woman ignites something in the man, and he takes over from there. Mme. Récamier was just such a woman; she was never a writer, but she evoked gallons of ink and sweat from gifted men while calmly smiling and sitting in her salon. Sand's idea was that the woman must be just as self-conscious, analytic and articulate about the course of a passionate affair as the man. Her own success in this is apparent in her letters, journals and magnificent autobiographical writings, and she tried to embody it in the heroines of her two early novels, *Indiana* and the nearly unreadable *Lélia*. The first, Hofstadter points out, is another theft, this time from Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*, with the sexes reversed.

But Sand remains famous as a great woman, not as a great writer. Her legendary trousers have stamped her as the apostle of female sexual freedom, not as the apostle of female literary expression, even though she was even more notori-

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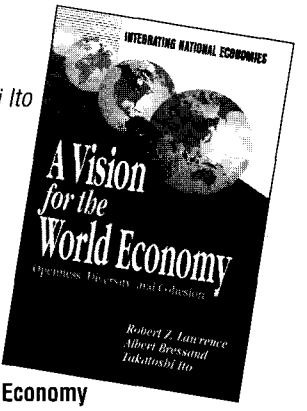

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ous in her day for all her other costumes, and she wrote unceasingly for decades. Unfortunately, all her other novels—dozens of them—were written for income, not artistic fulfillment. They were best-sellers that have not stood the test of time. They are still gripping, though, in the way best-sellers are, if you're not looking for greatness.

Hofstadter, like so many others, is captivated by Sand, which makes him furious with her for having falsified some of her letters before publishing them. He's not at all mad at old Chateaubriand for falsifying his memoirs. He says of Sand, "Her life was like a painting that never dried, and any time she wanted, she could paint into it, wet-in-wet"; as if, because she insisted that her artistry went into her life, just like a woman, she doesn't qualify for full artistic license. After all, she was writing it all up just like a man, and the rules for that are somehow different.

The Musset-Sand correspondence remains a landmark in French literary-erotic history. Women thereafter had to try to measure up as sentient, self-aware lovers and writers, and not just act or write on impulse; men had to take more realistic account of their mistresses' imaginative lives and complicated feelings, and not go on rendering them as salvific angels, delicious animals or dangerous mysteries. Later writings about love reflect this shift away from high Romanticism, even starting with Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*; and it can't by any stretch be wholly attributed to George Sand. But she was indeed prophetic.

Hofstadter's modern judgment about Sand brings up the notable change in French attitudes about love's role in the writer's life during the period he considers. First we see the Romantic notion evidently motivating Constant and then Sand, that a consuming passion is essential to the creative imagination, and so love's unmitigated agonies must be invited and then augmented by turbulent, face-to-face *scènes* and *explications*, and the whole must form the daily stuff of self-exciting journal entries and an unbroken flow of letters. Sainte-Beuve could feel justified, in that epoch, in insisting on the crucial importance of a writer's personal experience to the quality and character of his writings. By the end of the century we find the belief apparent in Anatole France, that undergoing the constant pain of a consuming passion is stultifying and dangerous to good imaginative health, and so its worst horrors must at length be placed at a certain distance, a literary distance that will allow them to be processed at a remove.

A group of writings that Proust composed in 1908-10 were published after his death under the title *Contre Sainte-Beuve*; they show him opposing the nosy critic by articulating the view that the writer is always a separate person from the one who is living the life. This view seems to see even further, that the writer is the one who is remembering the life even while it is going on. The crucial thing that love offers writers, Hofstadter suggests, is the revelation that when language tries to convey the truth of love on the spot, it congeals it into a kind of falsity.

This may not matter in ordinary love-as-politics, the kind for lovers who aren't writers, since between them the stakes are always changing, and no word is the last. But a truthful literary account must be created out of the imagination working on the stored memory, maybe with an assist from other people's writings; it can't be fixed in the daily overheated scribbles of an anguished and besotted pair. Proust's great work, in part treating of the more excruciating aspects of love, could be finally constructed only in immobile solitude in one room. There he could effectively blend the stored-up resources of memory and artistry, perhaps using some old letters and journals and some literature, maybe seeking some corroborative conversations. There he would willingly invite the pain only of the work. That alone would recreate the true emotional past that he sought.

Hofstadter finds a great lack in modern love, French or any other, in the decline of letter-writing. He blames much on the telephone, which interferes with the vital flow of real correspondence by adding important vocal exchanges that make surviving letters unintelligible, even to the parties themselves in later days. It's certainly very hard on the future snoop. The greatest boon the telephone offers to adulterers and all other lovers is the heady joy of future privacy, even though cellular phones are now proving this joy illusory; but something may yet be done about that. Meanwhile the ordinary phone does prevent literary lovers' ridiculous utterances from having a literary future.

Still, Hofstadter is right. The natural fetishism aroused by sexual passion makes letters immensely precious physical substitutes for the absent beloved, full of his words in his inimitable scratches, of fragrance and palpable contact with her hands and maybe lips, with hair and clothes, with the coffee, the heat, the whole atmosphere that surrounded its writing and sending—glorious traces of love's body, uncaptured on the transient phone, not so easily engendered on the computer screen. No wonder so many people have kept love-letters, at great risk to honor, maybe to life itself, certainly to future privacy.

Among writers, of course, the love-letter is still fundamentally a piece of writing. Any lover-writer might feel justified in keeping copies of letters sent, besides saving those received, just to let them be brooded over by future writers who would read with creative sympathy, not just prurient curiosity. A writer might feel right to keep them as a literary bequest, never mind the family and friends who would wince if they were published, or non-writing readers who might wince in sympathy. Many writers certainly burnt them, like Flaubert, and with relish; but when we read about a bunch of old love-letters destroyed by a great writer or a great writer's legatee, we usually don't cheer for the wisdom, we groan at the loss.

Hofstadter's book is all the more clever for working around the destruction of much amorous correspondence, as he tells us at the start, and building up his intrusions out of telegrams, other kinds of letters and other written material, especially journals and memoirs; and he happily reports that undestroyed love-letters are still turning up. I believe that he is wrong to think that letter-writing is over, despite the phone. Women are certainly still doing it, even by hand, and writers are doing it as always, no doubt with eventual publication in view. Published memoirs seem more numerous than ever, most of them putting only parts of the author's life under examination and dwelling on a period, a relation, a change, posing as letters to the world. Books like these are still teaching new writers how to cast intimate personal material into its most authentic mold, how to feel, to remember feeling, and then to write about feeling so that a reader can't help hearing its true inward echo in the language.

This book even seems to be one such memoir, perhaps a meta-memoir. It's Hofstadter's very personal, fanciful revel, disguised as detached historical meditation, in his invented intimacy with a sequence of French writers and their actual intimates, his own writer's reconstruction of their private struggles with love, memory, writing and each other, even across generations. His neat, somewhat patronizing essay on them is better executed than many of the patchy, blurry love affairs and their literary traces that he takes up and puts down. Hofstadter has desired to put them in order, to synthesize their haphazard material, to possess them as one brisk totality cast in the modern vernacular. His title might even more

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accurately be *The Love Affair as This Work of Art.* He reveals himself to us, in showing how his people reveal themselves to him; and of course, like Sainte-Beuve, he is not so appealing as they are. He would be the first to admit this, and the final effect is to send us back to the works of his long-dead French friends, to conduct our own relations with them as we may, and maybe to write about them.

ANNE HOLLANDER is the author most recently of *Sex and Suits: The Evolution of Modern Dress* (Knopf).

Out of Chaos

BY TOMAS VENCLOVA

Tangled Loyalties: The Life and Times of Ilya Ehrenburg by Joshua Rubenstein

(Basic Books, 482 pp., $35)

In the early 1960s, many intellectuals in the Soviet Union used to call Ilya Ehrenburg "our International Settlement." The nickname was invented by Alexander Tvardovsky, the editor of *Novy Mir*, the harassed liberal monthly. It referred to a peculiar arrangement in old semi-colonial China: the International Settlement was a part of Shanghai, which differed from the rest of the city, being inhabited mainly by prosperous British, Europeans and Americans, who were immune from Chinese law. Ehrenburg's position in Moscow was just as bizarre. He was not a member of the Party, but he was a very influential figure; he was Jewish and did not conceal it, but the usual restrictions applied to Jews seemed not to matter in his case; he served the system but was somewhat exempt from its iron rules—a distinction never merited even by Politburo men.

In a country in which the struggle against "cosmopolitanism" was a citizen's fundamental duty, Ehrenburg flaunted his European tastes and emulated Western standards in his appearance and his behavior, with more than a modicum of success. Visitors to his apartment in Moscow could see works by Picasso and Léger on the walls, as well as his famous collection of pipes, described in *Thirteen Pipes*, Ehrenburg's collection of stories. The inhabitant of this spectacular apartment spoke French as well as Russian, and he treated his guests to Gitanes acquired on a recent trip to Paris, where half of the city's celebrities were his friends, or to Stockholm, where he maintained a long and involved affair with a Swedish woman. All this took place in the period when Europe was, for all practical purposes, as unattainable for a Soviet citizen as Alice's Wonderland, and officially depicted as the source of all evil.

Ehrenburg was an intermediary between two incompatible worlds. In the opinion of some, he provided a bridgehead for Soviet ideology in the West. In the opinion of others, a bridgehead for the West in the Soviet Union. Both views were probably true. And virtually the same pertained to Ehrenburg's position between Russia's past and Russia's present. *Novy Mir* printed his autobiography, *People, Years, Life,* in which he related his meetings with diverse historical figures, from Tolstoy and Pasternak to Lenin and Beria. (Anna Akhmatova used to call the book *People and Beasts.*) Many young people, myself included, appreciated Ehrenburg's memoirs, since *People, Years, Life* introduced us to hundreds of writers and artists who were destroyed in the Stalinist purges or never mentioned for other compelling reasons.

Still, those of us who were prompted by *People, Years, Life* to seek more knowledge—and there were many such people—soon found that the book consisted mainly of half-truths. It was also silent on very large, even crucial chunks of history. Ehrenburg's ellipses were sometimes worse than lies. Perhaps it could not have been otherwise. But here again Ehrenburg played an ambiguous role: revealing a part of the unmentionable past for the younger generation, he nonetheless presented it in a Soviet light. Again he made use of his privileges: no one else would have been allowed to print such things in the official press. (*Samizdat* was not widespread at the time, though it was the wave of the future.) He was attacked, of course, by censors and critics. He fought the censorship, trying to persuade the Politburo that cutting his memoirs would harm his image in the West and therefore hamper his role as the Soviet "ambassador of peace." Still, he was his own best censor. He usually managed to find the middle ground, equally acceptable and equally unsatisfying to the authorities and to the reader.

Everybody knew that Ehrenburg's position was as precarious as it was unique, but nobody doubted that he would survive. He was born to survive and had been in worse predicaments in Lenin's and Stalin's times. In addition to his status as an "International Settlement," he was the very embodiment of the slippery and shadowy post-Stalin period known as "the thaw"—a term, incidentally, that he coined. In his very weak novel *The Thaw*, Ehrenburg was the first to write about the early political and cultural stirrings after Stalin's death. The title of that book, if not the book itself, enjoyed such tremendous popularity that several generations, by force of an optical illusion, were inclined to believe that "the thaw" was not just described by Ehrenburg, but caused by him.

Perhaps nothing revealed Ehrenburg's status—Joshua Rubenstein is right to put the word "tangled" into the very title of his biography of Ehrenburg—more clearly than the celebration of his seventieth birthday in 1961. The story of that anniversary forms a focal point of Rubenstein's book. It was an official affair: Brezhnev himself, not yet a Secretary General but the strictly ceremonial Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, presented him with his second Order of Lenin. At the same time Ehrenburg was publicly praised by leading liberal writers for his dedication to freedom of thought. He received congratulatory telegrams from Marshall Konstantin Rokossovsky, a martinettish figure who was anything but a dissident, and from Anna Akhmatova, the great and persecuted poet. (It is impossible to imagine another occasion for their signatures to appear side by side.)

As one of many young men of letters who used to visit Akhmatova, I remember that Ehrenburg was not exactly her favorite. At her most charitable, she would say: "Well, we see each other rarely. But there is no enmity between us, no enmity." She valued him but kept her distance. (So did Rokossovsky, for different reasons.) Attempting to preserve his loyalty to both camps, Ehrenburg was accepted, to a degree, by both—and, to a larger degree, alienated from both. Perhaps the most precise formula for Ehrenburg's fate was coined by Marina Tsvetaeva, another great and persecuted poet, as early as 1921: "We were on friendly

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terms, he was good to me, although there is little of love in him. I forgive him everything, since no one loves him."

It is no wonder that such a bizarre destiny would attract the attention of biographers. There are already many books about Ehrenburg in various languages. Anatol Goldberg's *Ilya Ehrenburg*, published in English in 1984, remains a classic of sorts. Most of the books on Ehrenburg rely heavily on his own memoirs, which are a trove of otherwise unavailable information. Like most autobiographies, however, Ehrenburg's is an attempt to embellish and censor its author's life and personality. Joshua Rubenstein's book makes much use of *People, Years, Life*, but it also takes advantage of scores of interviews, and also of archival sources which have become available only recently. It dwells on Ehrenburg's private life in more detail than any other book known to me. Rubenstein happily avoids the factual errors and inaccuracies that abound in many Western works on Russia. (I found only two or three questionable statements. Ehrenburg's friend Yelizaveta Polonskaya was not "a well-known poet"; Fanny Kaplan, who attempted to assassinate Lenin in 1918, was not necessarily "deranged"; and Kirov was not an "independent-minded figure.") A solid and eloquent work, *Tangled Loyalties* will be useful for anyone interested in Russian and European culture of the period, and in the vagaries of the Communist faith.

And yet Rubenstein's subject feels suddenly very dated. If Ehrenburg was not always a darling of liberal and dissident intellectuals of the '60s, he was at least a vivid presence, a cultural figure to be reckoned with. Now, after the collapse of the Soviet empire, he looks pretty irrelevant for the new generation. He was a prolific writer who authored dozens of novels and thousands of essays (not counting more than 800 poems—he considered himself primarily a poet, a judgment hardly shared by his contemporaries). In the last years of his life, almost all of Ehrenburg's works were widely read or eagerly looked for. A large part of his early output survived only in a few private libraries and in closed sections of public ones: much of it was simply unmentionable in public, which increased the readers' interest. Ehrenburg's well-publicized struggle with the censors and Party hacks contributed to the allure of his later works for his contemporaries, but I doubt that any of those writings are anything more than a period piece today. His novel *The Stormy Life of Lasik Roitschwantz*, first published in the West in 1928, was banned in the Soviet Union until 1989 (in the '60s, I was more than happy to read it in a Polish translation, which was also forbidden in the Soviet Union); but in the days of glasnost the book made hardly an impression. In 1990, the uncensored text of *People, Years, Life* finally appeared, and fell flat. Its readers saw that it was full of banalities and distortions.

This indifference toward Ehrenburg set in immediately after his death in 1967. The development of Russian social and intellectual life left him behind. Liberal Westernizers, who considered him one of their own, gradually began to perceive him as insufficiently radical and too strongly influenced by Marxist dogma. For the Slavophiles of Solzhenitsyn's bent, he was incapable of understanding Mother Russia's mission. The semi-fascist or fascist wing of Russian society hated Ehrenburg for his Jewishness: these people did not change, they just started to express their ill will more openly. Many Jewish intellectuals rejected Ehrenburg, too. Yes, he was one of the few who were brave enough—and famous enough—to fight anti-Semitism publicly; but he was an assimilationist, he never concealed his ambivalent feelings toward Israel and more than once he praised the Soviet Union as the proper place for the Jewish people. The literary elite, finally, was less interested in politics than in art, and soon realized that Ehrenburg was a second-rate writer compared to Platonov, Bulgakov or Babel, whose works, in the '70s and '80s, came to occupy their rightful place in Russian letters. Even Ehrenburg's "cynicism" was far surpassed by the disillusion of the children of perestroika.

Ehrenburg's position as an "International Settlement" was certainly different, but he started out with another difference, a different settlement, which he shared with millions of Russian Jews: the Pale of Settlement. Jewish subjects of the Tsar were permitted to live only in the western regions of the empire, formerly belonging to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, where the Russian occupying army in the eighteenth century found them already settled. Ehrenburg's parents gained permission to move beyond the Pale in 1895, when he was 4 years old, and his life consisted to a large degree of his emancipation from the ethnic mentality that he described critically in *The Stormy Life of Lasik Roitschwantz*.

Ilya's grandfather was strictly observant. He disowned his six sons, who attempted to break the pattern of traditional life and attended Russian schools. (Later he made peace with them and Ilya was named in his memory.) The

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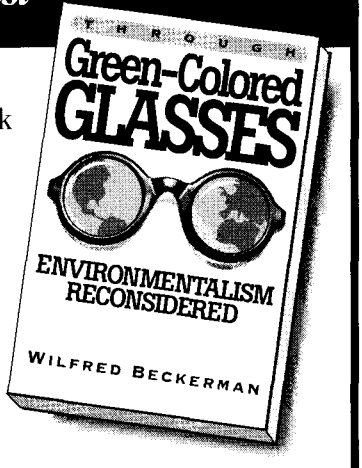

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divorce with the old mentality was nevertheless irreversible: *Tangled Loyalties* notes that the family belonged to the barely 3 percent of Russian Jews who considered Russian, and not Yiddish, their native tongue. The future writer never learned Yiddish or Hebrew. All his life he remained an atheist for whom Judaism, as well as any other religion, was hardly more than a set of ethical rules mixed with superstitions.

The next stage of Ehrenburg's emancipation, as was often the case in this period, consisted of embracing the revolutionary faith. At 14, Ilya helped to build barricades in Moscow. His friend and mentor at the time was Nikolai Bukharin, who later became a favorite of Lenin, and then a close ally of Stalin, and finally Stalin's victim. Bukharin's attempt to create something that might be called "Communism with a human face," feeble and abortive as it was, foreshadowed Khrushchev's and Gorbachev's endeavors (which were also unsuccessful in the final account). To Ehrenburg's credit, he remained loyal to his friend even when it was mortally dangerous. With characteristic thoroughness, Stalin shot or imprisoned everybody who had had the slightest contact with Bukharin. (Maxim Gorky, who supported Bukharin's line, was most likely poisoned.) Ehrenburg was one of the very few, and inexplicable, exceptions. He kept his faith in Bukharin's version of "Communist humanism." One may even say that he became Bukharin's heir during the Stalinist years.

But let us return to 1907. In October of that year, the police searched the apartment of Ehrenburg's family (a fairly comfortable flat consisting of eight rooms). The only suspicious material found was the musical score of the *Russian Marseillaise.* For the young Ilya, revolution seemed just a romantic adventure, something out of Victor Hugo. Still, he was arrested. After five months of imprisonment, he was allowed to go abroad, ostensibly for medical treatment. Already alienated from his father (who deposited, and forfeited, a considerable sum to guarantee his appearance in court), he entered the next stage of his emancipation, joining the Russian émigré community in Paris. He met Lenin and Trotsky, and disliked them both.

The Paris experience of Ehrenburg can be best epitomized in the words of Czeslaw Milosz, who came to the city much later but found in it the same aura that influenced the young Russian fugitive:

> I descended toward the Seine, shy,
> a traveler,
> A young barbarian just come to the
> capital of the world.
> We were many, from Jassy and Koloshvar,
> Wilno and Bucharest,
> Saigon and Marrakesh,
> Ashamed to remember the customs of
> our homes . . .
> Soon enough, many from Jassy and
> Koloshvar, or Saigon or Marrakesh
> Would be killed because they wanted to
> abolish the customs of their homes.
> Soon enough, their peers were seizing
> power
> In order to kill in the name of the
> universal, beautiful ideas.

The international avant-garde of the twentieth century that crystallized in Paris was, to a considerable degree, of Eastern European origin. Ehrenburg opted not for its politics, but for its art. Both were interlaced, of course. But Ehrenburg was bored to death with the intolerance and the sectarian bickering that characterized the Russian political émigrés. He hated their concentration on the most narrowly interpreted Marxism, which isolated them from all the other currents of European thought. He considered converting to Catholicism and simultaneously expressed an interest in Zionism; he made friends with Apollinaire, Modigliani and Picasso; he translated French poets and began to write poetry himself.

World War I destroyed the Europe with which Ehrenburg had fallen in love—a continent without internal borders, a hive of tradition as well as creativity, a region civilized enough to make life bearable even for those out of money and out of luck (as he usually was). At the same time, the war enabled him to embark on a new career, in which he found his true calling. It was journalism. His articles for Russian newspapers powerfully conveyed Ehrenburg's despair and nausea in the face of absurd slaughter.

In the summer of 1917, he returned to a Russia in the throes of revolution. He was almost equally unacceptable to both sides: for the Whites he was a leftist and a Jew, for the Reds he was a "bourgeois nihilist." Yet the Reds frightened him even more than their adversaries. After the October revolution he fled south, to the Ukraine, Crimea and Georgia, where the political situation was fluid to the point of chaos (more or less as it is now). In the press of those days, he condemned Bolshevik atrocities and described a budding totalitarian society with unusual acumen. Many years before Hannah Arendt, he spoke about the "banality of evil," about cruel mediocrity posing as the salvation of the world.

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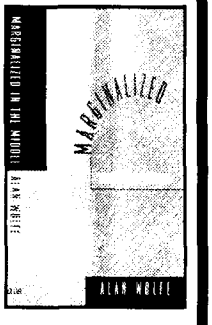

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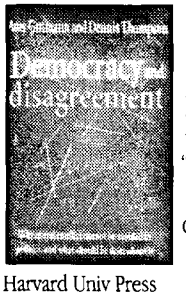

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After the Bolshevik victory, Ehrenburg returned to Moscow. He was arrested but soon released, owing to Bukharin's intercession. For some time he was active in literary circles, freely mingling with the best Russian writers and artists of the era. The Bolsheviks were less than nice folk, but at least they allowed, and even promoted, aesthetic experimentation. (It did not last long.) Still, life in Moscow was not as attractive as life in Paris, and in 1921, also with Bukharin's help, Ehrenburg got permission to leave for France. He was perhaps the first person who managed to emigrate from Soviet Russia legally.

Ehrenburg left Moscow on an "artistic mission:" he told Bukharin that he needed to sit down in a Paris café to write a novel. That was not a lie. In twenty-eight days, he produced *The Extraordinary Adventures of Julio Jurenito and His Disciples*, which became an international best-seller. (In fact, it was written not in Paris but in a Belgian spa. The French police expelled Ehrenburg from his beloved city and country after a fellow émigré—apparently Alexei Tolstoy, a writer who later became a Stalinist—denounced him as a Bolshevik agent.) *Julio Jurenito* remains Ehrenburg's most important work, probably his only book that still makes interesting reading. It is the story of a modern Antichrist, an enigmatic Mexican (patterned partly on Ehrenburg's friend Diego Rivera) who takes up the role of judge of human civilization, demolishing twentieth-century idols and ideologies, bourgeois as well as revolutionary, with unsurpassed verve. *Julio Jurenito* represented the high point of Ehrenburg's nihilistic irony. Some of its passages seem prophetic: the writer predicts the Nazi movement, its rapprochement with Communism, the Holocaust, even the atomic bomb dropped on the Japanese. Strangely enough, Lenin liked the book, though he was himself presented in it in a less than flattering light, and so the novel appeared also in Russia, with a preface by Bukharin.

Strictly speaking, the position of a semi-émigré, published and read in both worlds, in Western Europe and in Soviet Russia, was not an anomaly during the '20s. Ehrenburg shared it, for a time, with Gorky and Pasternak. But he attempted to remain "astride the barricades" longer than most. Unfortunately, his subsequent books never achieved the rank and the fame of *Julio Jurenito*. His next novel, *The Life and Death of Nikolai Kurbov*, a portrait of an honest if inhuman Chekist, was denounced by the Soviet critics as "filth" and "slander." *The Love of Jeanne Ney* was more or less politically correct from the Bolshevik point of view, and incredibly kitschy.

Ehrenburg's novels and stories still brought him some success, were translated into many languages, adapted for the stage and made into movies. (They were written in a cinematic style, in short and striking episodes.) Yet he realized that he was not a first-rate writer; and in the late 1920s he fell into despair aggravated by poverty. There was also the language problem. He could, perhaps, have switched to French, but he was interested primarily in the Russian audience—not the émigré audience, which was conservative and rapidly dwindling, but the audience in the Soviet Union. He visited Moscow, composed an article in Lenin's memory, and his writing gradually began to approach Soviet standards, which were still a bit loose at the period.

In the early '30s, Ehrenburg made his choice. From that time on, he was no longer a bridge between the Soviet Union and the West, but a Soviet emissary in Europe, perhaps its most influential and successful one. By that time Stalin had already consolidated his rule, which made Ehrenburg's choice even more fateful. Stalin had publicly praised one of his stories as early as 1924, yet this was hardly a guarantee of survival. (In the same lecture Stalin also praised Boris Pilnyak, whom he later ordered to be shot.) And yet the dictator developed a bizarre tender spot for Ehrenburg (as he did for Pasternak). Unpredictability was one of Stalin's assets. Rubenstein also notes correctly that Stalin preferred people with a tainted political past to unblemished revolutionaries.

As for Ehrenburg, he might temporarily preserve the illusion that he would be able to continue the work that he considered his mission: to mitigate the excesses of the regime and to make Soviet culture a part of world culture. Such an illusion was shared, among others, by Bukharin and Gorky. Outwardly, Ehrenburg flaunted a cynicism that became his trademark; in *Summer 1925*, his most personal book, he wrote that "there is no treason, there is only change, alternation of trades, countries, so-called 'beliefs' and also—hats." But that was an overstatement. He remained true to his beliefs, which were based on a version of nineteenth-century liberalism.

On the other hand, he sincerely hated the mediocrity and the philistinism of Europe between the wars. Here Milosz helps once more. In *The Captive Mind*, he depicts a sensitive and intelligent man taking a walk in a modern city. "What is the significance of the lives of the people he passes, of the senseless bustle, the laughter, the pursuit of money, the stupid animal diversions? ... If one penetrates into the minds of these people, one discovers utter nonsense.... They are the force of inertia personified.... The intellectual's eyes twinkle with delight at the persecution of the bourgeoisie, and of the bourgeois mentality.... Yet he is warm-hearted and good; he is a friend of mankind. Not mankind as it is, but as it *should* be."

In reality, nothing was as it should be. Socialist Realism seeped into Ehrenburg's new books, and he himself contributed to its creation. His style became a mixture of banalities, aggressiveness and fake individualism. In 1934, he published *Out of Chaos*, a paean to Stalinist industrialization. It was not without some risky passages (which Rubenstein rates too highly), but it was a conventional work. One of its characters, Volodia Safronov, a devotee of "old" cultural values, is presented as morally bankrupt. A latter-day Ivan Karamazov, he induces a worker to perform a crime against the fatherly Soviet state and then commits suicide. In the destroyed figure of Volodia, Ehrenburg killed his former self, the skeptic still dedicated to the humanist faith.

The suicide was not irreversible: Ehrenburg's former self reappeared after Stalin's death. But for two decades he was one of Stalin's apologists, and most of his work of that period (with one exception, to be discussed in a moment) was trash. In 1935, Ehrenburg became the moving spirit of the International Writers' Congress in Defense of Culture in Paris, an anti-fascist enterprise, in which Ehrenburg did his best

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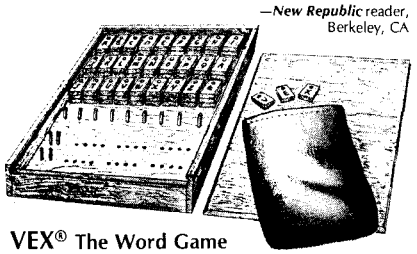
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to divert the attention of its Western participants from Stalinist practices, which hardly differed from Nazi ones. Attacked by his former friends the Surrealists, who were sympathetic to the exiled Trotsky and unhappy with Soviet mores, he responded by accusing them of "onanism, pederasty, fetishism, exhibitionism, even sodomy."

Then, he went to Spain as a war correspondent for Bukharin's newspaper *Izvestia*. In Madrid, he met Hemingway, who portrayed him in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* as a nameless journalist whose sentimentalism smacked of hypocrisy. Ehrenburg always maintained that his involvement in the Spanish civil war provided him with an experience of pure revolutionary spirit untainted by Stalinist distortions. The reality was more complicated. As Rubenstein convincingly demonstrates, he was instrumental in forging Soviet policy toward Spain, and he continued to follow the Stalinist line: his silence about the arrests and the murders of socialist and anarchist leaders by Stalin's secret police was far from an honest anti-Fascist struggle. Ehrenburg understood the danger of Nazism very well, but he wished to fight one plague with another plague.

He returned to Moscow in December 1937, at the very peak of the Great Terror. At the express wish of Stalin, he was given a journalist's pass to Bukharin's trial. To his credit, he did not write about it. Now, after some (though not all) of the KGB archives have become open to scholars, we learn that a case against Ehrenburg had been prepared. Babel, among others, was forced to accuse him of being a Trotskyite and a spy. (Before he was shot, Babel withdrew the accusation, but that would not have helped if Stalin insisted on Ehrenburg's arrest.) Instead of prison, Ehrenburg was allowed to go to Paris once more, accompanied by his wife. It seems that he considered defection; a hack writer named Valentin Kataev even secured permission to occupy Ehrenburg's dacha, on the grounds that the latter had broken with the Soviet Union.

But Ehrenburg's loyalties were too tangled for that. He remained in Paris, technically still a Soviet correspondent, even after Molotov and Ribbentrop signed the nonaggression pact, "friendly relations" between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany were established, and the Germans entered the city. After the surrender of France, he returned to Moscow via Germany, spending two nights in a Berlin hotel with a sign forbidding Jews to enter. The management did not insist on that in Ehrenburg's case, since he was considered a representative of an allied power.

Ehrenburg correctly considered Nazism as an ultimate evil. Like many in the '30s, though, he also thought that the Western powers were too corrupt to be of use for anything except appeasement. However great the Stalinist evil, the Soviet Union was, in Ehrenburg's eyes, the only state prepared to fight Hitler, and therefore the last hope of mankind. This belief was the main cause of his unswerving loyalty to it. Yet his loyalty was turning into betrayal—of his friends, of his liberal beliefs and, last but not least, of his people. He had underestimated Stalin's perfidy and had also undervalued the will and the power of the democratic nations.

In the first months of World War II, he felt like a wreck. For a long time, he was incapacitated by a psychosomatic illness, and after returning to Moscow he reckoned with the possibility of arrest. That did not happen. On the contrary, Stalin endorsed his novel *The Fall of Paris*, an anti-fascist book that also venomously attacked French bourgeois politicians. (To be precise, the word "fascists" was excised from its text by the censor and replaced by the word "reactionaries.") Still, Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 gave Ehrenburg a paradoxical feeling of inner liberation. He was not alone.

The war brought Ehrenburg more recognition than any other period of his life. He became the most famous journalist in the Soviet Union, arguably the most famous journalist in the world. His articles—2,000 of them in the war years—were eagerly sought out by Soviet soldiers and Western politicians, and it was said that Hitler planned to hang him publicly on Red Square after the expected surrender of Moscow.

One cannot pass over in silence the many weaknesses of Ehrenburg's wartime journalism. More often than not, it mixed Soviet and even Slavophile clichés with French rhetoric. Toward the end of the war, Ehrenburg developed a peculiar mythology of revenge. The Nazis spread the rumor that one of the leaflets signed by Ehrenburg told Russians to regard all German women as their rightful booty: an ugly myth, which has been repeated, incidentally, by right-wingers and anti-Semites in Eastern Europe up to this day. Still, some of Ehrenburg's pronouncements were questionable, to say the least. Rubenstein relates the story of Lev Kopelev, a young Soviet officer of Jewish background, who tried to stop his soldiers' attacks on German civilians and insisted publicly that Ehrenburg's articles were immoderate, for which he

"I never did fit in. I couldn't believe the rules there."
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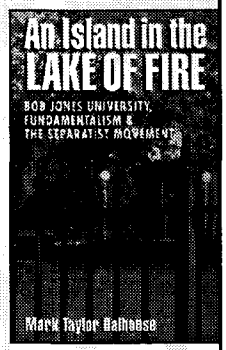

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landed in prison. (Many years later he became a well-known dissident.) In this instance, Kopelev and not Ehrenburg was the real hero.

In April 1945, Stalin, who had extended his full benevolence to Ehrenburg throughout the war, instigated an article in *Pravda* which denounced his anti-German rhetoric as "simplifying." A treacherous blow to Ehrenburg, it was caused mainly by Stalin's calculations pertaining to his relationship with the Allies. And one cannot escape the suspicion that Stalin's anti-Semitism also played a role here.

Ehrenburg, again, was an assimilated Jew for whom Judaism seemed an archaeological curiosity and who watched attempts to revive Jewish cultural life with a detachment that bordered on indifference. His *Lasik Roitschwantz* made use of Hasidic folklore, but was highly ironical in its depiction of Jewish characters, presented as epitomes of provincialism. The war years changed his attitude considerably. Ehrenburg was probably the first writer in the world to become aware of the full magnitude and the full horror of the Holocaust. He never failed to emphasize the torment of the Jews, and he did it in a country in which anti-Semitic prejudice was widespread and powerful. Ehrenburg's testimony about the Nazi crime stands out as his great service to his people and to mankind.

Ehrenburg visited the ravine at Babi Yar, where tens of thousands of Jews were massacred, and wrote the very first poem about it. He published articles about the death camps, about Jewish soldiers, about Jewish partisans whom he met in Vilna (Vilnius) and elsewhere. His grief blended with pride when he saw his people defending themselves. As a consequence of these writings, he acquired a moral authority among Jews and many non-Jews, a prestige that had evaded him before. Around 1943, he inaugurated an important project: under his guidance, twenty-odd writers began to compile *The Black Book*, the first extensive record of the Holocaust in world literature, a record that was initiated while the catastrophe was still taking place.

Before the end of the war, however, it became clear that the book would not be sanctioned by the Kremlin. Indifference and open enmity toward Jews prevailed. Speaking about their martyrdom was expedient for the authorities while the Nazis were occupying half of the Soviet Union and Stalin could pose as the defender of the persecuted; but later it went against the grain. It also drew too much attention to the inconvenient fact that a large part of the local population had supported the Nazis and contributed to the massacre. The official Stalinist line was that all the people—Russians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians and others—had suffered under the Nazi rule, not only Jews. (This was true, but it ignored the fact that the Jews were the only ones who suffered and died because they were who they were.)

The Black Book was banned. Its very title was mentioned by the KGB in postwar years as proof of a Jewish conspiracy. (It appeared in Jerusalem in 1980 and in Vilnius in 1993, many years after Ehrenburg's death.) And that was only a portent of things to come. As the war ended, Stalin did his best to isolate his country from its former allies. Soviet Jews, who in wartime had managed to maintain some links with the Jewish diaspora in the West, became "foreign agents." Stalin's hatred toward them increased after the establishment of Israel and especially after the visit of Golda Meir to Moscow, where she was greeted by crowds obviously unauthorized by the Politburo.

In 1948, an all-out assault on the Jewish community and Jewish culture was begun. In its ferocity, it was not unlike Kristallnacht and other Nazi practices, though it was conducted in ominous silence. Virtually all the members of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, which was active during the war, were arrested and secretly executed. One of them, Solomon Mikhoels, was assassinated on Stalin's order and then given a state funeral. An actor who had achieved the rank of a world celebrity, he was almost as famous as Ehrenburg, probably too famous to become an unperson. But Ehrenburg, once more, survived.

He continued his prewar role as a spokesman for Soviet interests in the West. This was, again, a life tainted with moral compromise. At the peak of the Stalinist disaster, Ehrenburg's anti-American harangues and maudlin descriptions of the socialist transformation of Eastern Europe earned him prizes and medals. At best, he hinted at the regime's crimes in a roundabout way that was not necessarily understood by his audience. He privately admonished the Soviet hacks who criticized Picasso for being "alien to the people." He tried to preserve some vestiges of independence, extending help to Pasternak and Akhmatova. It is true that Ehrenburg managed to smuggle a modicum of reality into his new novels (which were weak), even mentioning Russian popular anti-Semitism by name, but on the whole Stalin controlled him. For the dictator, Ehrenburg was a decoy, living proof to gullible Westerners that a cosmopolitan intellectual and Jew could prosper in the Soviet Union. Also, Stalin rarely missed an occasion to humiliate his spokesman.

Perhaps the worst moment in Ehrenburg's life occurred in 1950, when he was asked by English journalists about the fate of David Bergelson and Itzik Fefer, two Jewish writers languishing in prison. (They would be shot in 1952.) He said that he had not seen them for two years (which was true), but would have known if anything unpleasant had happened to them. That was an outright lie; he knew exactly where they were. And before that, in Paris, he had lied similarly about Babel to his widow. In his memoirs, Ehrenburg wrote about the high price he had to pay for being "true to men, to the century, to fate." Well, on these occasions he was true only to Stalin.

Preparing for the war which would finish off the capitalist West, Stalin de-

*Snow Psalm, to the Conductor, on Yonat-Elem-Rechokim**

For this, we'll need our doves again.
See how they have turned the sky their color,
Tempering the air's reluctant pallor
With a gray, iridescent discipline,

As if each cloud's escaping cargo
Had a fringe of doves on its circumference,
Wings arced at a respectful distance
From the unsuspected resonance of snow

Music of hexagons? Music of whiteness?
Music of a heaven's hardened tears?
Music of the calm interstices
Between the shedding sky's abandoned layers,

The willows' fallow harps restrung with snow
And hills awakening their instruments
With variations on a rumored silence,
Its feathers' shallow plunge, its startled coo

JACQUELINE OSHEROW

** loosely, the dove of distant silence*

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cided to proceed with his own solution to the Jewish problem. The notorious "Doctors' Plot" provided a pretext. Since the Kremlin physicians, most of them Jewish, were accused of poisoning Party leaders, the Jews were to be protected from the rightful wrath of the people by sending them off to Birobidjan and Far North. At the peak of this evil propaganda campaign, Ehrenburg received the Stalin Peace Prize. Then he was asked to sign an "open letter" denouncing "Jewish bourgeois nationalists" and requesting the help of the authorities in relocating Jews to Siberia. He was one of the very few who refused. He wrote a letter to Stalin emphasizing that the move was wrong, and that he would sign the "open letter" only if Stalin personally maintained that Ehrenburg's signature was desirable. Ehrenburg hinted that the Soviet "final solution" was probably contrived by overzealous henchmen and not by the Leader himself; and even if that was not the case, the Leader could still refrain from its implementation, putting the blame for his insane idea on his subordinates, as he had often done before.

Ehrenburg's letter was a dangerous gamble. Stalin had great freedom of action in responding to the man who dared to lecture him. He could execute Ehrenburg immediately; or put his signature under the letter without his consent, and then execute him; or order him to sign, and then execute him irrespective of Ehrenburg's obedience or disobedience; or stop the implementation of the Siberia project (this was unlikely), and execute Ehrenburg instead of it. We will never know his response, since at this point God himself interfered. The dictator died, and the "Doctors' Plot" was disavowed by his successors. In any case, Ehrenburg's act, after many years of submission, was incredibly brave.

The rest was anticlimactic. Ehrenburg wrote the expected eulogy for the dead dictator, but from that time on he resumed his old liberal ways. He did not challenge the authorities openly. He never wrote for *samizdat* or "for the drawer," as many writers did, since he wanted to reach as wide an audience as possible. As Rubenstein notes, "Ehrenburg chose to play within the rules of the game, but always looking to challenge the limits of what was permissible." He did his best to broaden the access of the new generation to non-Soviet culture, pushed for Hemingway to be published and for Picasso to be exhibited, wrote introductions for Tsvetaeva and Babel (such quasi-Marxist introductions, which helped unpersons to dodge the censor, were called "lightning rods" at the time), and produced a brilliant essay on Stendhal. He was sympathetic (if critical) toward the dissident movement, but he did not maintain close ties to it. His memoirs, as I have said, were widely read, and doubtlessly useful, but it would be hard to call them his "crowning glory," as Rubenstein does. He died in 1967, on the threshold of the era which belonged not to him but to Sakharov, Solzhenitsyn and Brodsky.

With obvious justice, Rubenstein quotes a popular comparison of Ehrenburg to Josephus Flavius, the historian who took part in the Judean uprising against the Roman Empire, but later surrendered to the Romans and chose survival, limiting himself to the role of the keeper of memory. Ehrenburg attempted to manipulate the regime, but the regime was more successful in manipulating him. He tried to help his times but almost destroyed himself in the course of it. Rubenstein mentions that such people as Anna Akhmatova and Osip Mandelstam also paid their denarii to the Communist Party and Stalin, and he is perfectly right. But they did so only to save their lives, or the lives of their loved ones. (They did not always succeed.) They never received any rewards for their compromises, never became Stalin's spokespersons or enjoyed a kind of immunity, as did Ehrenburg. "He taught us all to survive," said Yevgeny Yevtushenko, who attempted, somewhat successfully, to inherit Ehrenburg's status after his death. But there are many ways of surviving.

Ehrenburg's testimony on the Holocaust was free of any moral ambiguity (though there would be no point in talking about him at all if he had passed over such a crime in silence). Sometimes he was also capable of courage. And yet finally he paid too high a price. Of course, I may be wrong. Nadezhda Mandelstam cautioned us against easy moral indignation, when she wrote Ehrenburg in 1963: "You know there is a tendency to accuse you of not reversing the direction of rivers, of not changing the course of the stars.... In other words, people always wanted the impossible from you and were angry when you did the possible." Yes, but Nadezhda Mandelstam herself, together with hundreds of self-sacrificing people, did accomplish the impossible, did change the course of the stars. If the idea of democracy in Russia will prevail, it will be owing not to Ehrenburg but to them.

TOMAS VENCLOVA is Professor of Russian Literature at Yale. He is the author most recently of *Aleksander Wat: Life and Art of an Iconoclast* (Yale University Press).

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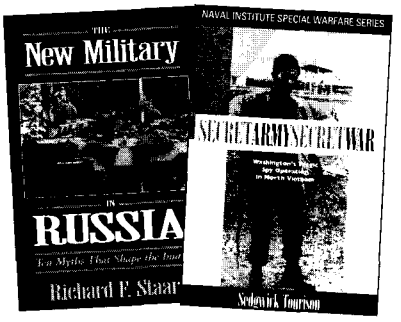

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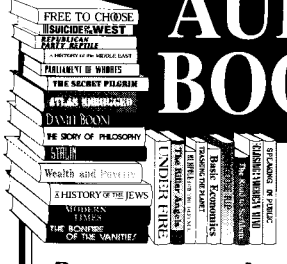

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Heroes and victims

ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT CLINTON may not be sufficiently cynical—or desperate—to steal Bob Dole's supply-side thunder with a tax cut of his own, the opening night of his convention did outshine the Republicans in the mawkishness department. Granted, the schmaltzy Ronald Reagan video the GOP aired in San Diego was hard to top, but the Democrats, by spotlighting James Brady, the Reagan press secretary crippled by an assassin's bullet in 1981, raised the Olympification of politics to new heights. Not only did they link their tearjerker to a concrete legislative triumph (the Brady handgun-control bill), they made off with a piece of the Reagan legacy to boot. They even trumped the Republicans' deification of Reagan: When Brady baby-stepped across the dais, once wheelchair-bound but now suddenly able to walk, was the implication not clear? Bill Clinton, worker of miracles, a baby-boomer Jesus Christ.

THE DEMOCRATS' VERY BRADY SEquel was an affecting speech by actor Christopher Reeve, who played Superman in the movies and is now, sadly, also wheelchair-bound, having been thrown from a horse in 1995. Although center stage at one of the biggest political occasions of the year, Reeve insisted, preposterously, that he was giving a "nonpartisan" speech, which seems rather like giving a nonreligious speech at Mass. Yet, oddly, for all his worthy liberal exhortation to fund medicine and research, his remarks *did* have a certain apolitical quality. In an innovative twist, he portrayed Franklin Roosevelt not as a president who happened to be disabled (the standard FDR image), but as a disabled person who happened to be president. Reeve and Brady, Reagan and FDR, Billy Graham and Muhammad Ali, Kirk Douglas and Elizabeth Glaser—all became exhibits in the gallery of victims. (And celebrity victims, too: Is a stroke a reality only when it afflicts a movie star?) Their personal dramas seemed designed not to invoke allegiance to a particular philosophy of governance but simply to stimulate warm feelings that will somehow be transferred onto the man who happens to be this party's nominee.

ONCE, IN HIS DAYS AS A PROFESSOR of literature, Vladimir Nabokov was delivering a heartfelt tirade against Laurence Olivier's film *Hamlet*. Nabokov's strong opinions provoked a cry from one undergraduate. "But how can you say such things? Have you actually seen the film?" Responded the professor: "Of course I haven't seen the film. Do you think I would waste my time seeing a film as bad as I have described?" What was charmingly arrogant for Nabokov in 1949 became breathtakingly boneheaded for Bob Dole in 1996. After Dole's celebrated rebuke last year of Hollywood movies he'd never seen, editorialists had great fun with his bald opportunism. But they missed a larger point: the formulaic fare Dole lambasted is all so indistinguishable that he really didn't *need* to have seen it to make his critique. Similarly, when Dole said he hadn't read the Republican Party platform, his candor drew more laughter, not the plaudits he deserved. After all, why on earth *would* he read the platform? The editors here picked it apart two weeks ago and found a hodgepodge of contradictions, formulas and mindless sloganeering. (We were going to vivisect the Democrats' platform similarly—equal time and all that—but decided it was our own editorials that would start to sound formulaic.) Last weekend, before a group of black journalists, Dole was asked about one of the platform's few substantive planks: its proposed constitutional revisions to deny automatic citizenship to anyone born in the U.S. Did Dole agree with it? "No," he said, with characteristic terseness. Dole should have been hailed for shunning the hypocrisies of campaign-trail politics and admitting the obvious: that the very idea of a platform is a relic from a less candidate-centric era, that this right-wing platform bears no relation to how he would govern. Instead, Dole won only finger-wagging reproaches from the consistency police.

ONE OF THE MOST DURABLE CANards about political journalism is that reporters reward their sources with favorable copy and punish those who don't talk. "Protection-racket journalism," James Fallows, the rector of American journalism, has called it. I know of few reporters who doubt that this practice is rampant, and fewer still who follow it themselves. No wonder. The charge assumes a fantastic lack of ethics or fantastic abundance of naïveté on its practitioner's part. The charge is often leveled against author Bob Woodward, a man of very high ethics and very low naïveté (I can vouch; I used to work for him). Critics zing Woodward for relying too heavily on anonymous sources for information. Yet these critics always assert that they can not only discern the identity of these anonymous sources (if so, where's the problem?), but also see in all clarity how the sources take in the reporter. One example: Woodward's colleague at *The Washington Post*, press columnist Howard Kurtz, selected three scenes from Woodward's new book, *The Choice*. In each one he identified the person he took to be both the source and the "hero." Because Kurtz's nominations for source and hero were in each case identical, he concluded Woodward was getting spun. Never mind that Kurtz was simply guessing at the sources (they're anonymous, remember?), which for Woodward are usually multiple, not single. Never mind that the question of who acted heroically in each scene is a matter of subjective judgment. More important, the charge assumes that whatever a source tells a reporter goes unverified. Does anyone practice journalism that way? It also assumes a source can regulate precisely how his words will appear in print—an assumption refuted by the multitudes of red-faced sources who have ever wished they hadn't spoken to a reporter, Woodward or any other.

IF YOU NEED PROOF OF HOW A source can do himself in, pick up *Off the Record* by Monica Crowley. Crowley holds the rare distinction of having been impressed by Richard Nixon's *1999*, one of the many works of stunning banality the late president wrote in his post-Watergate campaign to reinvent himself as a foreign policy sage. Crowley parlayed a fan letter to Nixon into a gig as his assistant. Once hired, she secretly jotted everything he said, then wrote her own book. And he thought he was rid of his taping system! But it's not just that Nixon emerges again, as insecure and vindictive; that's old news. What *Off the Record* should do is retire the popular notion of Nixon as an astute analyst of current affairs. From his inane comments on leadership ("Great leaders must have two main tiers of attributes. The first is general; the second is more particular.") to his simplistic foreign policy advice ("With Yeltsin, what you see is what you get"), Nixon seems not a man of experiential wisdom but a second-tier pundit, a tad smarter than Tim Russert perhaps, but several notches below Mark Shields. Too bad he passed away. He might have made a comeback writing political platforms.

DAVID GREENBERG

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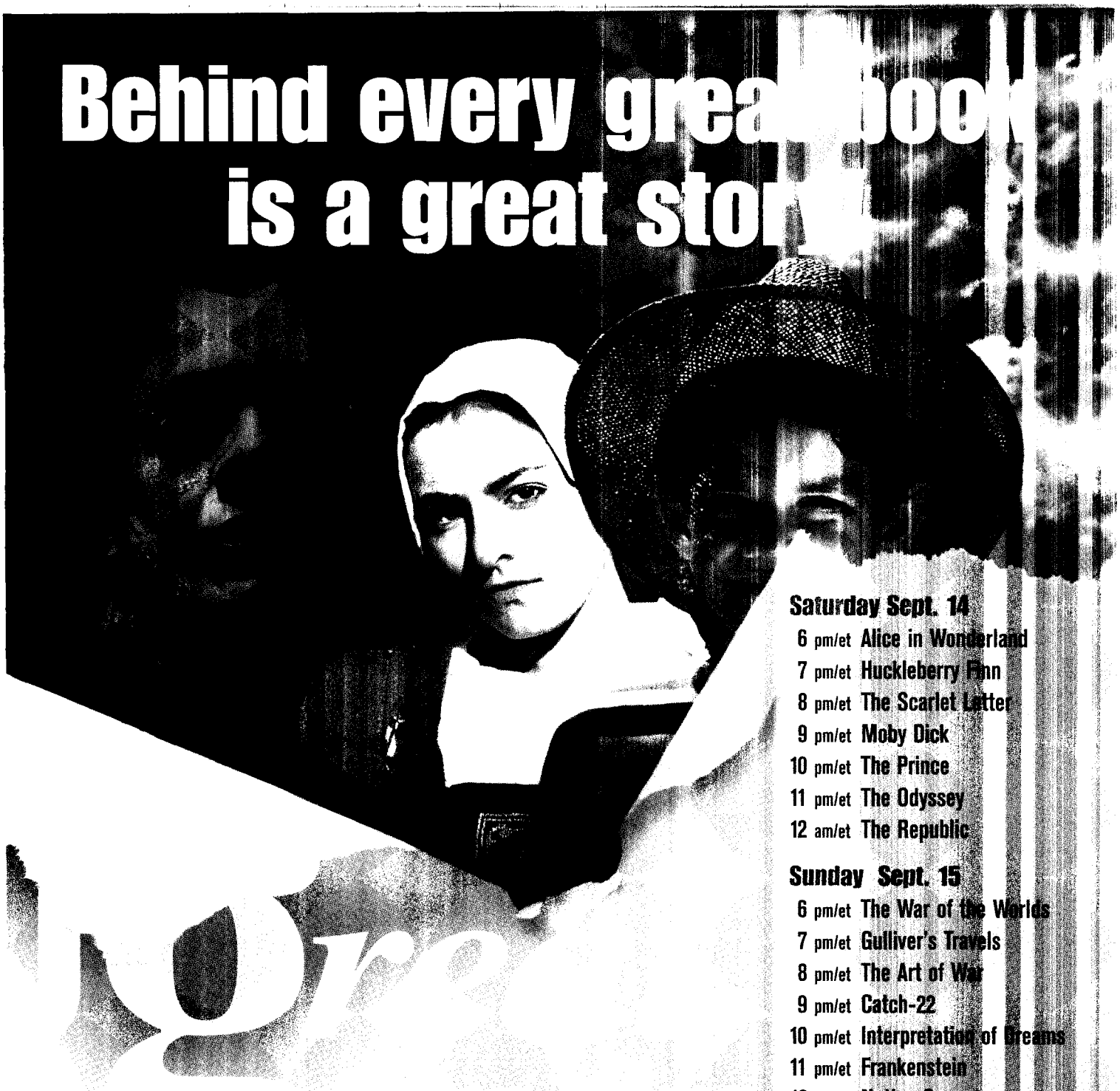

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6 pm/et Alice in Wonderland
7 pm/et Huckleberry Finn
8 pm/et The Scarlet Letter
9 pm/et Moby Dick
10 pm/et The Prince
11 pm/et The Odyssey
12 am/et The Republic

Sunday Sept. 15

6 pm/et The War of the Worlds
7 pm/et Gulliver's Travels
8 pm/et The Art of War
9 pm/et Catch-22
10 pm/et Interpretation of Dreams
11 pm/et Frankenstein
12 am/et Native Son

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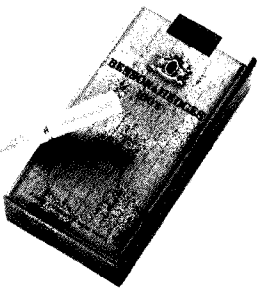

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